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Editorial

Koinonia Journal began as a forum for interdisciplinary discussion among doctoral candidates at the Princeton Theological Seminary. In the years since its birth, the *Journal* has expanded both in scope and size. Future issues will have an increased proportion of contributions by non-Princeton doctoral candidates.

The current issue contains a rich assortment of articles selected by the editors for their constructive contributions to religious studies and for their potential for interdisciplinary dialogue. The interdisciplinary nature of the *Journal* is reflected in that the articles represent five different disciplines: history, theology, practical theology, missions and ecumenics, and biblical studies.

Craig Atwood's article ("The Mother of All Souls: Zinzendorf's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit") is a historical and theological review of Nikolaus von Zinzendorf's feminine metaphors for God. Atwood not only examines Zinzendorf's own articulation of these metaphors, he analyzes as well the influence of this articulation on the role of women in the Moravian communities led by Zinzendorf. He concludes with a caution that metaphorical theology does not necessarily lead to major structural-conceptual changes in religious communities.

In "Divine and Human Power: Barth in Critical Dialogue with Brock, Case-Winters, and Farley," Gregory Anderson Love examines the explicit and implicit understandings of power in the theologies of Karl Barth and in three recent feminist theologies: *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power*, by Rita Nakashima

Brock; *God's Power: Traditional Understandings and Contemporary Challenges*, by Anna Case-Winters; and *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy*, by Wendy Farley. After describing the similarities and differences between Barth's and the feminists' understandings of power, Love evaluates the respective strengths and weaknesses in their reconceptions of power as self-giving, compassionate love.

Robert K. Martin analyzes liberationist orientations to North American religious education in his article, "Paulo Freire's Liberationist Pedagogy and Christian Education: A Critical Investigation of Compatibility." Of particular concern to Martin is the lack of interest by religious educators in educational pedagogies that empower the laity to change the structures and dynamics of personal, societal, and religious oppression. He contends that Freire's "pedagogy of the oppressed" is particularly useful in ecclesial settings, but only as it is critiqued and reconstructed from a trinitarian theological perspective.

Ken Christoph Miyamoto's "The Buddhist Notion of Emptiness and the Christian God: Buddhism and Process Theology from an Asian Perspective" addresses the reality of the world's religious pluralism with special attention to Buddhism. His article seeks to articulate an image of the Christian God more appropriate to Japanese culture rooted in Buddhist tradition. Miyamoto evaluates the significance of process theology, particularly Cobb's version of it, for the task of contextualizing the Christian faith in Asia. He concludes that the Buddhist notion of Emptiness allows the Japanese to understand and interpret the Christian message in a more relevant and meaningful way in their own cultural setting.

In her article, "Bread as a Core Symbol: A Narrative Reading of John 6," Cheryl A. Wuensch builds on recent work exploring the function of symbolism in narrative. She implicitly rejects the approach of a previous generation of scholars embroiled in "old" literary criticism. These critics often impugned the narrative unity of John 6, suggesting it to be a patchwork of narrative and discourse material sewn together by a conservative redactor. In contrast, Wuensch argues that John 6 forms a cohesive unit within

the Gospel as a whole, a unit whose symbols enhance the author's overall narrative strategy. After studying the meaning and function of symbolism as a narrative device, she does an exegetical analysis of the symbolic function of bread as a unitive force in John 6.

This issue also features a good number of book reviews, covering books in biblical studies, history, theology, and practical theology.

—LOREN L. JOHNS

The Mother of All Souls

Zinzendorf's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

CRAIG D. ATWOOD

INTRODUCTION

Currently, there is much theological and psychological discussion about feminine metaphors for God. Some theologians advocate using such metaphors to help to heal the perceived damage done to women (and men) by patriarchally biased biblical and Christian language about God.¹

Although the Judeo-Christian tradition has been heavily patriarchal, feminine metaphors for the deity have not been completely absent in the church's history. The image of Christ as Mother, prevalent in Julian of Norwich and other mystics, is found even in such an orthodox thinker as Augustine (Bradley 1978:101-113). However, such descriptions have been rare since the Reformation, particularly in the Protestant branch of Christianity, except for certain sects or mystics (such as Jakob Boehme) who have self-consciously rejected many of the church's historic doctrines. Particularly notable in this regard is the Shaker movement under leader-messiah Ann Lee, to whom the final revelation of God came in the female form (Reuther 1983:36).

Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, a Lutheran theologian of the eighteenth century, represents a significant exception to this tendency

¹ See Rosemary Radford Reuther (1983) for one presentation of this method. Particularly helpful is Reuther's discussion of other viewpoints within feminism.

in Protestantism. He frequently referred to the Holy Spirit as Mother while proclaiming his complete adherence to the Christian tradition as embodied in the Augsburg Confession.² Moreover, Zinzendorf's doctrine and language found communal expression within the *Brüdergemeinde*, the religious community of which he was the acknowledged head.³

Unlike the occasional utterances of preachers and mystics throughout the history of Christianity, Zinzendorf tried to make his understanding of the Motherhood of the Holy Spirit a feature of the doctrine and worship of a religious community that spread into several countries and four continents. Thus, Zinzendorf's *Brüdergemeinde* of the eighteenth century affords us a rare example of a religious community that self-consciously adhered to the doctrinal and liturgical tradition of western Christianity, while employing feminine metaphors for God.

The only extended examination of this topic is the doctoral dissertation of Gary Kinkel upon which the following discussion depends heavily (1990).⁴ This paper builds on the work of Kinkel by examining not only Zinzendorf's concepts, but also the actual role of women in the *Brüdergemeinde*. We will explore Zinzendorf's pneumatology, the spread and demise of this doctrine within the community, and the role of women within his religious movement. Some concluding remarks on the implications of this history for current discussion will then be offered.

²For a good introduction to the life and theology of Zinzendorf as well as the question of his Lutheran orthodoxy, see Mary Havens (1990). For an overview of the radical pietist groups contemporary to Zinzendorf, see Ernst Stoeffler 1973.

³The *Brüdergemeinde* is the name by which the modern Moravian Church is referred to in Germany and was the self-designation of the church during the eighteenth century. In this paper the movement will generally be referred to as the *Brüdergemeinde* in order to avoid confusing the eighteenth-century Zinzendorffian community with its modern descendant. This name also communicates the ambiguous nature of the community, which only slowly became a distinct "church" (in the institutional sense of that word) after 1760.

⁴I am also indebted to the unpublished class notes of Arthur Freeman (1987) and to conversations with archivist Vernon Nelson at the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, Pa.

THE MOTHER OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:
ZINZENDORF'S DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

One of the distinctive features of Zinzendorf's theology is its Christocentrism, which has at times been erroneously described as "Christomonism."⁵ For Zinzendorf the non-Christian has contact with the Father only through the Son. This applies to the Old Testament as well as to the New. When the children of Israel encountered God, it was the Son, not the Father whom they encountered. Expanding on the Christology of 1 Cor 10:4, where Paul refers to the Rock in the wilderness (Num 20:7-11) as Christ, Zinzendorf asserted that every time the Old Testament refers to God, it in truth refers to Christ (Freeman 1962:74f).

Furthermore, Zinzendorf insisted strongly that the Creator was not the Father as stated in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds (a mistake that Zinzendorf felt did not invalidate the creeds themselves), but was Christ. He based this on Col 1:16, Heb 1:8f, and John 1:10, where the active role in creation is assigned to the *Logos* (Spangenberg 1965:50-56). This identification of the Creator and the Redeemer stresses the radical love of God shown in the Incarnation and Atonement and prevents any separation between the one who made the universe and the one who suffered to redeem it.⁶

Zinzendorf is similar to the fourteenth-century Rhineland mystics, Eckhart and Tauler, in his insistence that the essential, trinitarian God is an unfathomable abyss (*Untiefe*) (Spangenberg 1764:574; Kinkel 1990:145). The "naked God" is completely unapproachable and unknowable for the creature. Moreover, in Zinzendorf's thought, the Father appears to serve some of the same function as the God beyond the Godhead in Eckhart, since the Father remains in the background for Zinzendorf (Spangenberg 1964:589f).

Following the argument of John 14-17, Zinzendorf views the Father as so distant that there is no way to approach him except

⁵ Erich Beyreuther (1962:9-36) argues against the charge of Christomonism.

⁶ Barth particularly praised this aspect of Zinzendorf's thought (see Freeman 1962:1).

through the Son, who is the full and perfect revelation of the Father. From this perspective, Zinzendorf claims that the New Testament is not a revelation of the Son, but of the Father who was unknown to the world before the Incarnation (Freeman 1962:75). For this reason, only believers can pray the Lord's Prayer without blasphemy because only Christians know the Father (Zinzendorf 1973:3–5). Although the Son may have revealed the Father to the believer, he still remains in the background in Zinzendorf's thought.

The heavy stress on the second person of the Trinity seems to leave little room for the Holy Spirit. Indeed Zinzendorf says that for the first three decades of his life he had little understanding or experience of the Holy Spirit (Spangenberg 1964:576). The traditional Spirit was too abstract to be worshiped or followed. It was only after 1730, when he began an intensive study of Martin Luther, that Zinzendorf began to expand the role of the Spirit in his own theology and in the liturgy of the *Brüdergemeinde*. Following Luther's Large Catechism, Zinzendorf viewed the Spirit as the active agent in the post-ascension church (Kinkel 1990:88). The Spirit guides and protects the community in the absence of the Head (the Son). Furthermore, it is the Spirit who prepares hearts to accept the gospel of the Son and become obedient to him alone. Thus the Spirit is the great evangelist (Kinkel 1990:160). In brief, the Spirit calls the community of Christ into existence and guides that community until the return of Christ (Zinzendorf 1963c:64–65; Kinkel 1990:181).

THEOLOGICAL LANGUAGE

Zinzendorf maintained that philosophical language has no place in the Christian community because God's mystery may not be penetrated by even the most devout of metaphysical speculations. In discussing the East-West controversy over the *filioque* clause, he said, "But . . . the Holy Trinity, for wise reasons, never allows humankind, when they soar into the divine essence and hyper-metaphysical definitions of it, to define it satisfactorily" (Zinzen-

dorf 1963a:155). This was a view shared by at least some of his disciples (Spangenberg 1964:578).

However, Zinzendorf repudiated a *via negativa*, or path of unknowing. God has given a revelation of the divine self that can be trusted even though it is an incomplete revelation. All a mortal can know of God is what God chooses to reveal. This revelation comes in the person of Jesus Christ, in the scriptures, and in personal encounter of the believer with Christ and the Spirit (Kinkel 1990:92–95).

Zinzendorf's primary concern was for individuals to encounter personally the God they worshiped. One way to assist in this personal encounter was to use only language that facilitated an affective response. Zinzendorf searched for concrete language that addresses the center of the individual's will and emotions.⁷ In contrast with philosophy, religious language must be anthropomorphic, according to Zinzendorf, because this is the language God uses in the Bible and in individual lives. The Spirit makes the biblical logos revelation real to the believer experientially (Kinkel 1990:149–152). Abstract or speculative language leads one away from the reality of God into a realm of human endeavor.

Zinzendorf did not articulate a consistent, philosophically defensible theory of language. He thus demonstrates some confusion, particularly on the question of metaphor (Kinkel 1990:34, 89, 226–228).⁸ He claims that religious or theological language is not a description of God *as God is*, but rather *as God is experienced*. It is a subjective language of relationship, not metaphorical language (Kinkel 1990:88f). He claimed that his theological language did not concern the impenetrable essence of God, but only “*was der Vater, der Sohn, und der Heiligen Geist uns sind*” (Zinzendorf 1963d:294). The words of the Bible are not a philosophical language given by God to reveal directly all God is. Rather, the Bible is

⁷ See Wilhelm Bettermann (1935) for a full discussion of Zinzendorf's view of language.

⁸ Kinkel is too eager to exonerate Zinzendorf from the charge of fuzzy thinking. Zinzendorf's distaste for philosophy inhibited his ability to articulate a theory of language that was consistent with his theological presuppositions. This failure causes confusion for the modern reader as it did for Zinzendorf's contemporaries.

the human record of the experience of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Because God allowed the authors of the Bible to respond in their individuality there is a diversity of theologies within the Bible. The writers of the scriptures used concrete imagery from their own experience to describe how God acted toward them and his creation. Moreover, the authors at times even gave mistaken notions about God, as Paul did in 1 Cor 15:24, where he clearly subordinates the Son to the Father (Zinzendorf 1963a:96).

The biblical language of the Trinity follows the pattern of concrete language to describe God's relationship to creation (Kinkel 1990:96f). There is no language for the essential Trinity, only the economic Trinity. That is all to which humans have access (Spangenberg 1964:574). Therefore, God is called "Father" because he acts as a father. God is "Son" because that describes the revealed relationship of the Father to Christ. However, more appropriate titles for the second person include "Savior," "Lord," and "Bridegroom," because these describe the relationship of Christ to his people (Zinzendorf 1963d:294).

Zinzendorf is not as consistent on this point as Kinkel implies, since the language of the Trinity as Father, Son, and Mother also expresses the interrelationship of the persons of the Trinity. The Spirit is not simply the mother of souls, but is also the mother of the Son (Kinkel 1990:103f). This goes beyond the language of God in relationship to us to a language of the interrelationship of the Trinity, though Zinzendorf denies that this is the case (Zinzendorf 1964b:61).

Considering Zinzendorf's belief in the concrete nature of theological language, it is easy to see why traditional descriptions of the Holy Spirit did not satisfy his criteria for appropriate language. *Fire*, *Dove*, and even *Spirit* are too abstract and impersonal for a believer to relate to existentially (Spangenberg 1964:579). Such titles do not speak to the heart because they lack personhood (Zinzendorf 1963c:53; Kinkel 1990:95f, 127). Zinzendorf felt that instead of those images, the most appropriate language for God was that taken from our first experience, namely the family

(Zinzendorf 1963b:3). Therefore, in the piety of the *Brüdergemeinde* the Trinity became “Father,” “Brother” (or “Husband”), and “Mother” (*Papa, Brüderlein, Mama*) (Zinzendorf 1963b:3).

At times the Spirit is the Mother of the Son and at other times the wife. Zinzendorf relates that it was in the period 1738–1741 that he developed his conception of the Holy Spirit as Mother, which was a breakthrough in his own appreciation for the active role of the Spirit in the church (Spangenberg 1964:579; Becker 1900:399–400).⁹ In 1747, he credited August Francke with this insight.¹⁰ Zinzendorf claimed that this language does not speak of the essential nature of the deity in terms of sexuality or gender, but describes the action of the Spirit in the world (Zinzendorf 1964b:61–65).

Zinzendorf frequently refers to *das Mütteramt* (Mother Office) of the Spirit, a word which stresses the function of the Spirit rather than the essence (Kinkel 1990:174). The Spirit is the Comforter who says, “I will encourage you, take you on my lap, speak in a kindly way, and do good to you just as a Mother soothes her little child” (Zinzendorf 1963b:4).¹¹ In Zinzendorf’s formulation, the Spirit is more than just the Comforter; she performs all the roles a mother performed in eighteenth-century society: nourishing, comforting, protecting, disciplining, admonishing, and educating the child (Zinzendorf 1963b:4–6). Moreover, Zinzendorf conceives of mother as the noblewoman who manages the estates in her husband’s absence. When Christ, the Husband, left the world, he put all his affairs in the hands of his wife (or mother) (Zinzendorf 1963a:155f). She is in charge of the church until the return of

⁹ Becker indicates that part of the impetus behind the development of the concept was Zinzendorf’s missionary venture to the native Americans of Pennsylvania in 1741. It is significant that the first use of this language, at least in print, was a mission hymn in 1736. See Kinkel, p. 73, for a translation of the hymn.

¹⁰ The “Special Historie” entry for May 1747 (Zinzendorf 1964a:50) gives the reference as Francke’s *Gnade und Wahrheit*, ch. 13, par. 8. I have been unable to verify this reference.

¹¹ *Ich will dir zureden, ich will dich auf meinen schooß nehmen, ich will feundlich mit dir sprechen, ich will dich zu gute machen, wie eine mutter ihr kindel zu gute spricht und stillt.* Translated by Kinkel (1990:173).

Christ, when she presents the purified souls to their eternal husband (Zinzendorf 1963b:14).

As Zinzendorf developed his doctrine, the Spirit increasingly took on the role of conversion. This understanding came from Luther's concept that the Spirit works through the Word to bring people to faith and salvation. However, Zinzendorf separates the Spirit from the Word more distinctly than Luther.¹² The Spirit prepares hearts even before the Word is preached, working among non-Christian peoples before missionaries ever arrive. In fact, "the Holy Spirit . . . acts sovereignly; no people is too far away, no ground too cursed. . . . [The Spirit] knows how to communicate the truths of God even in the mothers womb" (Kinkel 1990:169).¹³ The mission role of the Spirit is central to Zinzendorf's concept of the Holy Spirit as Mother because it is the Spirit that produces spiritual rebirth. Therefore, the Spirit is the mother of believers since she gives them spiritual life. Moreover, it is the Spirit that calls the Christian community into being. Therefore, she is also literally Mother of the church (Becker 1900:401).

THE USE OF THE MOTHER METAPHOR IN THE BRÜDERGEMEINDE

SPREAD OF THE DOCTRINE

Zinzendorf was never content to leave a doctrine in speculative form, but sought to give it liturgical and devotional expression. This was especially true of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as

¹² Kinkel (1990:166–172) is concerned to make Zinzendorf agree with Luther as much as possible, but the evidence Kinkel himself presents makes it clear that there is a difference in understanding. It may be that Zinzendorf's distinction was in response to the theories of a mechanical transmission of the Spirit which were promoted in his day, but an apology for a difference should not obscure the difference itself. For Zinzendorf, the Spirit never contradicts the Word, but frequently works independently of the Word to bring persons to the Savior even without the aid of a preacher or a Bible. This anticipates the modern concept of "anonymous Christians."

¹³ The spiritual life of embryos is one of Zinzendorf's most original and controversial ideas. It is based upon Luke 1:41f, where the unborn John the Baptist leaps in the womb when Mary approaches (Zinzendorf 1963c:373).

Mother, since the motive behind its creation was to give the Spirit greater experiential substance in the community (Zinzendorf 1963c:370; 1963b:14). In the 1740s and 50s, this metaphor appeared not only in Zinzendorf's sermons, but also in hymns and liturgies, such as the following stanza from the 1754 British Moravian hymnal:

O tender Mother! kiss us,
Nurse us poor children carefully;
We are not so as we should be,
And this indeed does grieve us. (Sessler 1933:144)

Mother-language even made it into the principle liturgical piece of the worship of the *Brüdergemeinde*, the Great Litany. As late as 1769 the English-language Litany contained a petition that reads, "God Holy Ghost, our Mother" (Hymns 1769:282). During the 1750s, Zinzendorf tried to shift the community away from its almost exclusive focus on Christ to greater devotion to the Spirit. He even sought to deemphasize the popular festival in honor of the "Chief Eldership of Christ" and established a festival for the Holy Spirit (Meyer 1973:62).¹⁴ Dec. 19, 1756, was the first celebration of the "*Enthronisation des Heiligen Geistes zur alleinigen Kirchen-Mutter*" festival (*Losungen* 1756:n.p.).

The next year, Zinzendorf issued a daily devotional guide, *Ein Büchlein von Gott dem Heiligen Geiste der selbst ständigen Weisheit und unser aller Mutter zum täglichen gebrauch fürs Jahr 1757 disponiert*, which focused entirely on the Holy Spirit. This pamphlet was similar to the *Losungen*, having a Bible verse dealing with the Holy Spirit for each day of the year. In 1764 the Holy Spirit festival was moved from Dec. 19 to Pentecost, and was known as "*Das Fest der Mutter-Pflege des Heiligen Geist*" (*Losungen* 1764:June 10).

¹⁴ Meyer quotes an entry in the *Jüngerhaus Diarium* for 1/1/57 which states that the Festival of Christ as Chief Elder was introduced before the community had a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit (*die himmlischen Mutter*) and had dedicated itself to her.

CRITICISM OF THE DOCTRINE

During the 1740s and 50s, Zinzendorf defended this language both within and outside the *Brüdergemeinde*. In 1753 Henry Rimus published a pamphlet warning the English about Zinzendorf and his community. Among the practices Rimus presented for ridicule was that of calling the Holy Spirit “Mother” (Rimus 1753:40–42). With the help of an English Moravian, James Hutton, Zinzendorf defended himself and his community from the charges of Rimus, including the one about the Spirit. He quoted patristic authors as well as Luther and Francke to support his position (Zinzendorf 1755, part II:13). When Zinzendorf was queried by his disciples on this subject in 1751, he sought their support for his notion of the Spirit as Mother (Spangenberg 1964:575f). Zinzendorf acknowledged that theologians would have difficulty accepting his metaphor for the Spirit, but asserted strongly that it was the theologians who had misunderstood the Bible and did not know the Spirit (Zinzendorf 1963b:2).

One of the more thorough and effective critiques of Zinzendorf’s pneumatology was that of Albrecht Bengel, a leader of Pietism in Württemberg and pioneer in modern biblical criticism.¹⁵ In his 1751 publication, “*Abriß der so genannten Brüdergemeinde*” (Beyreuther 1972), Bengel accused Zinzendorf of being arbitrary in his language for God. Bengel understood Zinzendorf to be so subjective in his presentation of revelation that the individual could use whatever language for God seemed appropriate to him or her.

The distinctive naming of Father and Mother within Deity either has foundation in the matter itself or it does not. . . . Why does he not just as well say that the Son has two Fathers or two Mothers? Why does he not just as well call the Son the daughter of these two parents? (Kinkel 1990:117)

¹⁵For an introduction to the life and thought of Bengel, see Stoeffler 1973:94–107.

Zinzendorf, of course, denied this charge, asserting that language for God must be appropriate and consistent with the biblical witness. It should be the best language possible: the language of familial intimacy (Spangenberg 1964:577). For Bengel, the only appropriate appellations for the deity are those expressly offered in the scripture or that can be readily inferred from that revelation (Kinkel 1990:112). If Jesus had ever stated that the Spirit was his mother, or the mother of believers, then and only then would it be legitimate for Christians to follow suit. Bengel denied that humans should create titles or metaphors for God, calling that effort “arbitrary.” Zinzendorf, on the other hand, argued that humans must do this under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, since all language for God, even the language of the Bible, is ultimately metaphorical. Therefore, humans should use metaphors which best express the experience of God (Zinzendorf 1963b:3; Spangenberg 1964:578f).

Zinzendorf argued repeatedly against his opponents that his language was scriptural, based on the key verses, Isaiah 66:3 and John 14:26. The Spirit is the comforter who comforts as a mother comforts her children. Therefore, the Spirit is a mother to Christians (Zinzendorf 1963b:1f). Bengel rejected this exegesis as an improper linking of verses. Furthermore, he argued, it is problematic to go from function to essence. It is one thing to speak metaphorically of someone doing motherly things and another to say that someone is a mother (Kinkel 1990:115). Bengel implied that Zinzendorf would be right to assert the metaphorical motherness of the Spirit, so long as he did not name the Spirit “Mother” (Kinkel 1990:122f).¹⁶ Here Bengel identified one of the ambiguities in Zinzendorf’s concept, namely the question of metaphor and essence. As Kinkel indicates, Zinzendorf makes little effort to

¹⁶ Kinkel seems to misunderstand the nature of Bengel’s objection. This misunderstanding affects the final section of the dissertation, where he attempts to prove that Zinzendorf’s concept of the Holy Spirit was “orthodox” both within Lutheranism and the catholic tradition. There were and are few objections to Zinzendorf’s description of the motherly functions of the Spirit. The question raised by Bengel is whether it is orthodox to call the Spirit “mother.” Kinkel is correct that the answer to that question lies in one’s understanding of scripture, revelation, and language of God, but he fails to resolve it satisfactorily.

distinguish between concept, image, and essence. Thus it is not always clear whether the Spirit acts like a mother or is a mother (Kinkel 1990:34–35).

Despite Zinzendorf's (and Kinkel's) protestations that gender is not the issue, it is significant that Zinzendorf compares the Spirit to Anna Nitschmann, the leader of the single women of the *Brüdergemeinde* (Meyer 1973:61, note 233). If motherhood is genderless, then a male leader, particularly Zinzendorf himself, would be able to serve as an example of the Mother/Spirit to the community, but it is Nitschmann who is truly "*die erste Mutter in der Gemeinde*" (Meyer 1973:61). In naming the Spirit "Mother" it is impossible to avoid gender. Despite Zinzendorf's protests, he offered a feminine Spirit.

The feminine nature of the Spirit is evident in Zinzendorf's discussion of how pagans and those who lived before Jesus had sent the Spirit have a "dark revelation" of the Spirit (Zinzendorf 1963c:369). They have an inkling, or an incomplete conception of the Spirit as the mother of all souls. All religions have a goddess mother who is similar to the Spirit, but Satan corrupted the shadowy revelation into a deity to oppose the one true God.¹⁷ Reuther has also pointed out that feminine images of the divine tended to come to Christianity through paganism, often meeting with stiff resistance from the male keepers of orthodoxy (Reuther 1983:47).¹⁸ However, Zinzendorf offered the Christian Spirit as the perfection of the idea held imperfectly in paganism, so Christians could teach the "heathen," not vice versa (Becker 1900:400).

However, there is some confusion in Zinzendorf's thought on the question of gender itself. While he is adamant that the Spirit is not a female and the Father is not a male, he views the distinction as one of biological reproduction. In other words, God has no genitalia. However, he is imprecise on the question of gender

¹⁷ This type of argument is not new with Zinzendorf, but was used by the apologists of the early church to demonstrate that the gods of the pagans were a shadow or an antetype of the true God revealed in Christ. See for example, Justin Martyr (1970:277–281).

¹⁸ See Marion Zimmer Bradley 1982 for an imaginative interpretation of this process.

versus gender roles and Kinkel shares in this confusion. For Zinzendorf, the Spirit is indeed feminine in some archetypal sense. She is the Mother in an essential way without being a woman. However, this goes beyond simply assuming socially defined maternal roles, such as the education of children, which men could assume. If the Spirit is feminine in gender (regardless of sexuality), she would have a closer identification with females than with males. Thus the use of Anna Nitschmann as a symbol of the Holy Spirit would be legitimate.

Zinzendorf's hesitation to articulate fully this latent message of his doctrine may have been due to the bitter opposition his opinions aroused or he may have simply not seen it himself. It is curious that Kinkel accepts Zinzendorf's protests that the Spirit is not female, yet builds part of his criticism of Zinzendorf on the fact that women were not ordained in the community. "What more natural reflection of the motherly office of the Holy Spirit could there be than for those who fill the role of Mother among human beings to teach the community and proclaim the word of God?" (Kinkel 1990:226).¹⁹ It is only natural if there is a closer connection between females and the Mother Spirit than simply social functions.

DEMISE OF THE DOCTRINE

The Mother Office of the Spirit disappeared from Moravian piety and theology shortly after the death of Zinzendorf. In the British hymnal of 1789, the petition to "God our Mother" in the Great Litany was changed to read, "Thou Searcher of the hearts, God Holy Ghost" (Hymns 1789:221). The last mention of the "*Fest der Mutter-Plege des Heiligen Geiste*" was in 1770 (*Losungen* 1770). Thus, by 1771, a mere decade after Zinzendorf's death, the

¹⁹ In fairness to Kinkel, the bulk of his criticism lies in the violation of Zinzendorf's anti-subordinationism evident by the exclusion of women from the ranks of the ordained clergy. However, the very existence of an ordained clergy introduces an "un-Zinzendorffian" hierarchy in the community. Even Zinzendorf's most sympathetic interpreters were aware of his exalted status in the *Brüdergemeinde*, with special titles such as "the Disciple" and "the Ordinary" reserved for him. Unfortunately, this leads into a much larger discussion than we can pursue here.

community had rejected the maternal metaphor for the Holy Spirit. Despite Zinzendorf's efforts, the doctrine never took root in the hearts of the community.

However, the decline of the Mother Office of the Spirit is not simply a story of death by neglect. The church leadership took deliberate efforts to suppress it. The Synod of 1764 decided to revise the liturgies of the church to remove offensive passages and to let some of the more controversial writings of the Count to go out of print (Sessler 1933:221). Furthermore, the same synod encouraged the church to stop using the familial imagery for the Trinity and to remove references to the Holy Spirit as Mother from the hymns and liturgies of the church (Sessler 1933:221).

Spangenberg, the leader of the church after Zinzendorf's death, took steps to formalize the beliefs of the *Brüdergemeinde* in a systematic theology, *Idea Fidei Fratrum*, in 1778. His discussion of the Holy Spirit includes most of the doctrine of the Spirit as articulated by Zinzendorf, except there is no mention of the Mother Office of the Spirit (Spangenberg 1956:106–116). This shows that he regarded Zinzendorf's pneumatology as orthodox, except for the mother-language.

The deletion of the Mother Office of the Spirit is not due simply to Spangenberg's conservative personality. In the same work he vigorously defends Zinzendorf's controversial assertion that the Son is the Creator (Spangenberg 1956:51). Somehow the Motherhood of the Spirit was more problematic than an assertion that appeared to contradict the major creeds and confessions of the Western church. As the official biographer of Zinzendorf, Spangenberg could downplay the significance of this concept in the history of the Count and his community. It is unclear whether this denial of the mother metaphor was in response to widespread criticism that this metaphor had engendered outside the community, such as that of Rimiis and Bengel, or whether it was because Spangenberg and the leaders of the community themselves objected to Zinzendorf's formulation. Most likely it was both, but more research is needed on this point. In any event, the hierarchy apparently made a conscious effort to suppress the concept within

the community. I know of no opposition by members of the *Brüdergemeinde* to this suppression.

The self-conscious distancing of the church from the mother metaphor has continued until recently. The standard American history of the church reports, "The designation of the Holy Spirit as our 'Mother' embodied in them [Zinzendorf's Trinitarian liturgies prepared in the 1740s] is an illustration of the danger of substituting vivid figures of speech for logical ideas" (Hamilton 1967:657, note 33). In short, the foremost historian of the church agrees with Bengel. Not only did the successors to Zinzendorf expunge the language of motherhood from the worship and theology of the church, succeeding generations of interpreters have continued to marginalize its historical significance.

Some interpreters have done this by connecting the metaphor exclusively with the so-called "Sifting Period." The "Sifting Period" was a period of creative experimentation (circa 1743–1750) when Zinzendorf and the community at Herrnhag pushed religious language beyond the norms of common decency in venerating the wounds of Christ.²⁰ The hymns and sermons from this period have caused the church embarrassment for two centuries. Moravian historiography has interpreted this period as an aberration, or a brief madness, from which the church quickly recovered. "The Brethren soon found their way back to sober language and scriptural forms of thought" (Hamilton 1967:105). Connecting the Motherhood of the Spirit to the "Sifting Period" has allowed historians to dismiss this doctrine as an aberration in the thought of Zinzendorf. It was an experiment that quickly failed (Hamilton 1967:105).

In the standard histories of Zinzendorf and the *Brüdergemeinde*, including that of Kinkel, there is no evidence that this language persisted past 1749. However, we have seen that this is simply not true. Zinzendorf's own preoccupation with the metaphor increased in the 1750s culminating with the festival celebrating the Motherhood of the Spirit.

²⁰ See Sessler 1933, chap. 7, for a strongly negative appraisal of the piety of that period.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE BRÜDERGEMEINDE

THE CHOIR SYSTEM

The *Brüdergemeinde* was famous not only for the unusual language of Zinzendorf, but also for its radical reordering of traditional society.²¹ Soon after Zinzendorf took over direct leadership of the community of Herrnhut, the community organized itself in a unique fashion. Kinship ties were deemphasized in favor of gender and age relationships (Smaby 1988:10; Gollin 1967:68f). Based on Zinzendorf's pedagogy, the community was structured by "choirs"—groups based on gender, age, and marital status. The choirs were not created by Zinzendorf, but developed out of Pietist bands. In 1728 the Single Brothers of Herrnhut set up a separate residence, and in 1730, the women also did so under the leadership of fifteen-year-old Anna Nitschmann (Hamilton 1967:36f).

At this point Zinzendorf took a more active role, organizing the entire community into choirs. At the height of its development, the choir system was comprised of: Embryos, Infants, Boys, Girls, Single Sisters, Single Brothers, Married Women, Married Men, Widowers, and Widows, with subgroups of about ten souls within the choirs. The structure was designed for religious instruction and spiritual growth. But since the *Brüdergemeinde* made little distinction between the sacred and profane within the community, the system also served for social control and incorporation. The choirs worked, socialized, and worshiped together. As one contemporary put it, the choir was a "school of the Holy Ghost in which he prepares people for all kinds of use" (Smaby 1988:153). In most communities of the *Brüdergemeinde*, the Single Sisters and the Single Brothers set up separate communal living quarters. A person would live in the common house until he or she married. Some persons never left the common dwelling.

²¹ This applies only to the intentional communities established by the *Brüdergemeinde*, such as Bethlehem, Pa. Many members of the movement did not live in these communities and thus did not fully participate in the bold social experimentation of Zinzendorf. Herrnhut was the prototypical community.

Closely related to the choir system was the *Brüdergemeinde's* strict separation of the sexes. Zinzendorf was afraid that the emotion of Moravian worship would quickly spill over into sexual expression unless that outlet was closed to the brothers and sisters. This was motivated in part by a fear of scandal (Gollin 1967:69), but there was also a conscious effort to sublimate sexual energy into religious devotion. Emotions normally directed toward sexuality and human relationships were directed to the Savior and to the community instead (Smaby 1988:10–12). In the taverns, women served only women and men served only men. In worship, persons sat with their choir (except the infants), with men on one side and women on the other.²² Such separation extended even into death. The corpses of men and women were prepared in separate chambers and buried in separate portions of the cemetery (Lynar 1781:124–126).

An interesting side effect of this division based on gender was that the communities developed strong female leadership (Smaby 1988:186f). Choir leaders were responsible for the spiritual nurture and social discipline of each person in their choir. This was in part accomplished through the practice of “speaking,” which was a form of private confession before communion. The choir and band leaders used speaking to probe the soul of the choir members and to offer spiritual and personal guidance. Choir members also sought out their leaders for guidance on a wide variety of personal matters. It was improper for men to take over direct spiritual guidance of women. Not only would there be undue temptation, but men simply could not understand fully the spiritual needs and devotions of women. Therefore, except for the

²² See the plates in *Zeremonienbüchlein* in Beyreuther (1965) which are reproduced in Sessler as well. Particularly noteworthy for our discussion are plate numbers VIII and IX, which clearly depict a Deaconess in clerical garb (white alb), serving communion to the women. She thus has a position equal to that of the male Deacon. This is intriguing, since later the church was to declare the office of Deacon to be the first order of the ordained clergy and restricted to men until 1957.

community-wide sermon, all the pastoral care of women was carried out by women within the context of the choir.

Choir leaders were also responsible for the economic wellbeing of the choir.²³ They distributed work assignments and supervised training and education. The strict segregation of the sexes institutionalized in the choir system gave certain unmarried women a lot of power and authority in the *Brüdergemeinde* by restricting that authority to their own gender. The impression that the authority of women in the community was a result of the division of the sexes is strengthened by the fact that most of this authority was lost when the choir system was abolished in the nineteenth century (Smaby 1988:187).

The offices of “eldress” and “deaconess” developed slightly before the choir system and encouraged the development of the latter. This was part of Zinzendorf’s effort to recreate the offices of the old *Unitas Fratrum* in a modern setting, but was also motivated by the same pedagogy as the choir system (Cranz 1780:126). Elders and eldresses had particular spheres of responsibility within the community, such as discipline or economic activity. Eldresses were in charge of the care of women, but they met with their male counterparts to address community-wide concerns.

One of the first eldresses was Anna Nitschmann, who was elected by lot in 1730 at the age of 15. Over the years she grew to be Zinzendorf’s closest confidant, with a personal authority that rivaled that of Spangenberg. Within the church, it was common for Zinzendorf and Nitschmann to be called “Papa” and “Mama.” She was so close to Zinzendorf that they married about a year after his first wife’s death in 1756 (Weinlick 1989:225f). It is unfortunate that Nitschmann has been virtually ignored by historians of the *Brüdergemeinde*.

MARRIAGE

Another interesting aspect of the role of women in the *Brüdergemeinde* was Zinzendorf’s concept of the “militant marriage”

²³ However, the Single Sisters Choir generally had a male overseer for finances. Women could be trusted only so far in the eighteenth century (Smaby 1988:13).

(*streiter Ehe*), by which he meant that marriage was part of the Christian's calling in the world (Smaby 1988:159–163). One must not enter into such a union on the basis of emotion, but only based on the will of God. Frequently couples consulted the lot to see if there was divine sanction for their coupling.²⁴ Marriages, like most activities in the community, had to be approved by the elders of the church. The elders often arranged marriages with the consent of the individuals. Usually the choir leader, as well as the parents, would be consulted to determine whether a person should marry, and if so, whom (Smaby 1988:160; Gollin 1967:111).²⁵

Marriage was seen not just as a sexual, personal, or economic partnership, but as a partnership in ministry (Gollin 1967:111). The church chose partners on the basis of personal and occupational compatibility. This was particularly the case for clergy and missionaries, professions that were closed to single persons. If a missionary was widowed, a new wife was sent to him as soon as possible. If it was the missionary who died, the wife either had to accept a new husband or return to the community.²⁶ This understanding of the *streiter Ehe* was not balanced between the genders. The woman was to contribute to the work of her husband, but not vice versa. If a widow remarried, she would change her residence and service to that of her new spouse. Smaby indicates that in Bethlehem, widows were often forced to retire when their husbands died (Smaby 1988:168).

Zinzendorf drew upon Luther's exaltation of the married state over the monastic one, but went beyond the Reformer in stressing the blessedness of sexuality itself (Bainton 1987:233f). Sex, when done with an appropriate frame of mind, is an act of worship.

²⁴ The lot was an imitation of the Old Testament practice of using the Urim and Thummim in 1 Samuel and Numbers. A question would be put to the Lord and someone would draw a piece of paper, usually a Bible verse, out of a box. The slip would say "yes," "no," or "wait and ask again."

²⁵ Thorp reports that before 1771, 64% of all marriages in Wachovia, N.C., were decided by the lot (Thorp 1989:65).

²⁶ As with every rule, there were exceptions. One woman missionary in Barbados managed to resist the elders' plans to make her marry her husband's successor (Gollin 1967:120).

“The Heiland (Savior) not only won for our Brothers through his holy circumcision and for our Sisters through his holy incarnation in the body of Mary, [the ability] to keep their body parts pure and blameless but also to make holy and liturgical use of those same [parts] . . . in marriage” (Smaby 1988:163). Zinzendorf believed that sexual intercourse was a vivid analogy for the spiritual life (Sessler 1933:175). The coupling of a husband and wife was almost sacramental, since it was a physical expression of the love of the soul and her Bridegroom.²⁷

Zinzendorf expressed his ‘marriage mysticism’ in almost erotic terms, as when he states that the Christian—male or female—should be seen “as a consort, as a playmate for the marriage-bed of the blessed Creator and eternal Husband of the human soul” (Zinzendorf 1973:86). Women’s sexuality was not denied or limited to procreation, as one might expect from the fear of contamination evident in the rigid separation of the sexes. Rather, it was celebrated liturgically as a sign of God’s love. This positive appraisal of sexuality, particularly of women’s sexuality, is unusual in Christian history.

The above shows that the *Brüdergemeinde* was not free of patriarchal assumptions about women. Although the community gave women a surprisingly good education (including Greek), it restricted the economic activity of women to jobs “appropriate to their sex,” such as cooking, sewing, and child care (Thorp 1989:44). Their spiritual leadership was likewise restricted to a feminine sphere, namely their own choirs. It is therefore inappropriate to refer to feminism in this setting.

Even with these limitations, however, the power and status of women was greater in the communities of the *Brüdergemeinde* than in the contemporary culture, especially in colonial America. As Smaby puts it, “Male and female roles were much more symmetrical than in any other colonial society, including the Quakers” (Smaby 1988:13). This is particularly true for lower class and single

²⁷ The feminine pronoun for the soul is intentional because for Zinzendorf, all souls are feminine. At the inner core of our being we are all feminine and long to join with the male principle, Christ, in mystical union (Zinzendorf 1963e:208). I am grateful to Freeman for pointing out this passage.

women who could join the Single Sisters Choir as fully participating members regardless of social class. Nitschmann, for instance, was a teenage peasant woman given authority over women in the nobility. The *Brüdergemeinde* went a long way toward establishing an egalitarian society where men and women, commoners and peasants, were valued equally. They did not, however, attain that goal.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE THEOLOGY AND THE PRACTICE

It is tempting to see a causal relationship between Zinzendorf's theology of the Holy Spirit as mother and the prominent role of women in the *Brüdergemeinde* during the eighteenth century. This would appear to be a prime example of God-talk affecting attitudes toward women. If the Holy Spirit is depicted not only in feminine terms, but as an equal and active member of the Trinity, it would be natural to assume that the status of women would be equal with that of men. This is the argument of many advocates of inclusive language in worship and theology and it has merit. However, we cannot assume that this is always the case. We must see if this explains the phenomenon we have been examining.

With the the *Brüdergemeinde*, chronology suggests otherwise. The sociological factors that allowed for the expanded role of women in the community were developing in Herrnhut during the 1720s and 30s, before the emergence of the mother metaphor for the Spirit in the 1740s. The theological formulation cannot have caused this social development. Furthermore, the status of women remained high as long as the community structure remained intact, decades after the deliberate suppression of Zinzendorf's theological expressions. It was the transformation of the communities to family-based (as opposed to choir-based) systems that led to the diminishing of the status of women.²⁸ An argument that the mother-language of the Spirit led to the

²⁸ This conclusion is based upon the study of Smaby on how the change in the social structure of Bethlehem affected Moravian attitudes. My own research in other areas of Moravian life, such as the attitude toward death, confirms this conclusion.

elevation of the status and power of women in the *Brüdergemeinde* is therefore unfounded.

The relationship of the doctrine and practice demonstrates a more complicated interplay between linguistic constructs and social realities. Each shaped the other. Zinzendorf was raised as a Pietist, and Pietism in general valued women as spiritual beings who were in some ways more “naturally” religious than men. The *Brüdergemeinde* shared this assumption. Although there was a common ideal for men and women in the *Brüdergemeinde* (no double standard of morality), the community assumed it to be more difficult for men to reach the goal.²⁹

Pietism’s focus on “heart” instead of institutional forms and orthodox theology allowed for more diversified and personal expressions of the religious life. When religion is based on personal experience, there is less room for artificial barriers based on gender.³⁰ Although few Pietists (if any) dared to challenge the social structures of sexism, particularly in the ordination of clergy, their theology was more open to the devotional and spiritual leadership of women than was traditional Lutheranism. In contrast with Luther’s ideal that every father would be a priest to his family, Pietism placed women in the role of spiritual guide and disciplinarian. As a result, Pietism found many of its leading supporters in women of the nobility and upper bourgeoisie, women whose social influence was diminished, but who found increasing influence in the religious sphere.

Early in life, Zinzendorf learned to value the leadership of women, particularly that of his grandmother and his wife. Baroness von Gersdorf, Zinzendorf’s maternal grandmother, was a remarkable person who knew not only the biblical languages, but also Syrian and Chaldean. She corresponded with both the Pietist

²⁹This is the conclusion of Smaby (1988:169f) and it appears true to the evidence. This would put the *Brüdergemeinde* ahead of the general trend toward spiritualizing women in Western culture during the Romantic period.

³⁰Reuther (1983:12–16) supports this contention, noting that all theology is ultimately based on experience, but that orthodoxy is a canonizing of a particular past experience that agrees with present political realities. It is when theology self-consciously advocates present, personal experience as revelatory that orthodoxies are strained, allowing room for previously excluded formulations.

Spener and the philosopher Leibniz (Beyreuther 1978:178). Zinzendorf was raised primarily by this grandmother and his earliest experiences of God were mediated through her (Weinlick 1987:14–22).³¹ This effected his personality formation, predisposing him to affirm the ability of women to serve as religious leaders. In fact, he claimed, “I have my principles from her [Gersdorf]. If she had not been there, none of my affairs would have been accomplished” (Beyreuther 1978:179).³²

Zinzendorf’s wife, Ermuth Dorothea, was a spiritual leader and financial manager. She and Zinzendorf married under terms of a *streiter Ehe* in which one subordinated personal affection to the will of God (Weinlick 1987:57). From the early days of Herrnhut, Erdmuth was a leader of various women’s groups while also managing the family estates. Throughout their marriage, it was the Countess who insured the economic wellbeing of the Count’s farflung enterprises (Weinlick 1987:59–60). It was not surprising when he transferred legal ownership of his property to her so the Saxon government would not confiscate it (Weinlick 1987:109). Therefore, from his grandmother and wife, as well as Pietism in general, Zinzendorf learned to value the leadership of women.

Zinzendorf valued the feminine nature more than most in asserting that all souls are feminine.

All souls are sisters who secretly know him, who has made all souls so that each may be his wife. He has formed no *animos*, no manly souls, among human souls, but only *animas*, souls which are his bride, *Candidatinnen* of the rest in his arm and of the eternal bedroom. (Zinzendorf 1963e:208).³³

³¹ Weinlick emphasized that Zinzendorf also had contact with men to downplay a psychoanalytic interpretation of Zinzendorf’s theology. He is not convincing in this regard.

³² *Ich habe meine Prinzipien von ihr her. Wenn sie nicht gewesen wäre, so wäre meine ganze Sache nicht zustande gekommen.*

³³ *Alle Seelen sind Schwestern, das Geheimniß weiß Er, Er hat die Seelen alle geschaffen, die seele ist seine Frau, Er hat keine animos, keine männliche seelen formiert, unter den menschen seelen, sondern nur animas, seelinnen, die seine Braut sind,*

This feminizing of the soul contrasts markedly with Western/Greek tradition, which has seen the spirit as masculine, not feminine matter. For Zinzendorf, the most important part of the human is feminine and must be reunited with the masculine principle in God, the Husband of Souls. In contrast with Aristotelian conceptions of women as defective men, Zinzendorf proclaimed that God values the feminine gender. Men should value it too, since they are also feminine.

Considering this, it is interesting that the eldresses performed some tasks that later were reserved for the clergy, such as the distribution of the elements of Communion. In serving Holy Communion, both women and men were agents of the Holy Spirit. “The hand of the brother or sister serving is the hand of the Holy Spirit” (Zinzendorf 1963c:379). However, women apparently were not ordained to the sacramental clergy.

This is not a doctrine of androgyny. Men have a female principle, but women do not have a male principle. Furthermore, by stating that all souls marry the male figure of the Trinity (Jesus), one can see the continuing dominance of the male over the female. There is no female principle to which souls may be joined. This meant that a husband plays the role of Christ for his wife, but she does not in turn play the role of Spirit for the man (Sessler 1933:125; Smaby 1988:168).

The arguments Zinzendorf gives in support of his understanding of the Spirit as mother illuminate the doctrine’s relationship to the communal structure. Zinzendorf repeatedly argues that his doctrine expresses the concrete experience of Christians. The “mother” language was to give the Spirit a stronger role in the experience of the individual Christian. It was to be good for the “heart.” The concrete language of motherhood should replace the abstract language of theology so the believer can more readily encounter the Spirit existentially.

Zinzendorf asserts that when we experience the Spirit, we experience her as a Mother. Our language should reflect this

Candidatinnen der ruhe in seinem arm, und des ewigen schlaf-saals: Ach wären lauter eingerichtete herzel.

reality. However, reflecting also enhances the experience. Zinzendorf bases his doctrine of the Spirit on his experience of women in his childhood and in the burgeoning religious community of Herrnhut. In short, it was the active role of women in Zinzendorf's life and in the *Brüdergemeinde*, combined with his understanding of theological language, which led to the development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as Mother.³⁴

There is a relationship between doctrine and practice, but it is complex, even dialectical. Each informs the other. Pietism valued the religious nature of women and women responded by assuming leadership and responsibility. Zinzendorf was spiritually shaped by women and viewed them as conduits of the Spirit. Theologically, he viewed souls as feminine entities united spiritually and sexually to their redeemer. These factors, in turn, led to a radical restructuring of communal life that thrust women into strong leadership roles.

The example of these women religious leaders, combined with Zinzendorf's quest for anthropomorphic ("concrete") language, led to the concept of Spirit as Mother. This may appear to be a "messy" history, but it is supported by the historical evidence and it conforms to human experience. Society and ideology stand in a dialectical relationship, not a one-way, causal relationship.

CONCLUSION: RELEVANCE FOR CURRENT THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

How does this history inform our contemporary discussion about female leadership in the church and the use of inclusive language in theology and worship? First, inclusive language, including language about God, is not an innovation. Zinzendorf anticipated many of the contemporary theological arguments for inclusivity, particularly the metaphorical nature of religious language. His arguments that humans must create relevant language for the biblical God are echoed in seminaries today.

Second, there are differing, though not necessarily competing, motives behind inclusive language for God. Much of the contem-

³⁴ Kinkel alludes to this in chapter 2 of his study, but he does not fully develop the notion that sociology leads theology in this regard.

porary discussion centers on how language about God affects perceptions of women. On the other hand, Zinzendorf promoted feminine language for God to affect the human experience of God. The imaging of the Holy Spirit as mother was intended to help believers draw closer to God, not to change their attitudes toward other people (Zinzendorf 1963b:14). By combining these motives, one may move the current discussion out of a strictly politicized mode and into a pastoral one as well.

Third, it is naive to assume that a simple change in language or ideology will produce a corresponding change in society. The history of the *Brüdergemeinde* shows that the relationship of theology and society is complex. Social change involves many factors besides linguistics. In fact, in the *Brüdergemeinde* it was a radical reordering of society that elevated the status of women and prepared the way for the feminine language for God employed by Zinzendorf. Furthermore, being a sectarian movement, the *Brüdergemeinde* was able to reorder society by establishing independent and insular communities. This is not a practical program for the modern church.

Fourth, one should not assume that inclusive language will lead to an inclusive society. The *Brüdergemeinde* made good progress toward that eschatological goal, but accepted many practices and attitudes now rightly seen as patriarchal. Reuther's point that the goddess or Mother Spirit remains subordinate to the Father is true in the theology of Zinzendorf (Reuther 1983:60f). The Spirit is active in the world, but as the agent of Christ. The Spirit is Christ's proxy, a subordinate role, despite Zinzendorf's assertion to the contrary (Zinzendorf 1963a:155f). Moreover, androgyny, whether in God or humankind, does not necessarily imply equality for men and women (Reuther 1983:127f). Zinzendorf could easily proclaim a form of androgyny of souls while maintaining the household codes of the New Testament.

Finally, even an intensely religious and dedicated society, such as the *Brüdergemeinde*, struggled over this issue. As long as Zinzendorf was alive, the title of Mother for the Holy Spirit was at least tolerated, but it disappeared soon after his death. There is little

evidence that it became a strong part of the theology of the people themselves. This should caution advocates of inclusive God-talk from expecting an easy and lasting victory. The force of tradition and social convention is strong, even in a society as radical as the *Brüdergemeinde*.

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Divine and Human Power

Barth in Critical Dialogue with
Brock, Case-Winters, and Farley

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In her book *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power*, Rita Nakashima Brock says that Western culture, including the Christian tradition, has understood power as “unilateral power.” The world’s relations are hierarchically ordered. Power is a limited commodity which enables those who have it to dominate others—to “lord it over others”—in order to gain their way in the world. It is a view of power reflecting and supporting a patriarchal society, a view based on the images of the monarchical lord controlling his vassals or the patriarchal father controlling his wife and children.

For Brock, this view of power is sinful, based on the brokenheartedness of individuals and societies. True power, argues Brock, is not the distorted, unilateral power so often represented in western culture. Rather, it is the power of connectedness which flows between us and our inner selves and between our selves and other persons in community. It is relational power, the power of mutual love and caring, an “erotic power,” which heals and liberates our selves that we might become healing forces in the brokenhearted world.

Brock believes that the idea of “unilateral power” is supported and reflected in the traditional Christian view of God. The God of the tradition is a tyrant or paternalistic father who wields the

power of domination and who attempts to annihilate the self of the other (1988:xii, 49, 50, 52–55). In contrast to this view, Brock envisions God as the source of erotic power, as a Mother who nurtures the power of her children.

In rejecting a view of God as a cosmic tyrant, other contemporary theologians have also described God's power as the power of self-giving, other-affirming, empowering love. In *God's Power: Traditional Understandings and Contemporary Challenges*, Anna Case-Winters describes God's power as "life-giving and world-generative power," power that finds a strong model in female reproductive power (1990:195). In *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy*, Wendy Farley describes divine power as "the power of compassion" which is able to "give people their own power," restoring human spirits and overcoming dependence and despair (1990:87).

It is understandable that these three contemporary feminist theologians redefine divine power along similar lines. But another twentieth-century theologian, one whom these three feminist theologians likely would not consider an advocate of feminist theological reconstructions, also redefined divine power as "the power of divine love." Reformed theologian Karl Barth saw reflected in Jesus Christ crucified a God who wills power to be shared power, and whose power is seen essentially in God's readiness for suffering love (1957:598f).

Do all these theologians conceive God in the same way? Do these four theologians mean the same thing when they claim that God's power is the power of self-giving, other-affirming love? What does it mean to say that divine power is the power of empowering love?

In this essay, we will compare and contrast Barth's understanding of divine power with the views of Brock, Case-Winters, and Farley. Although we highlight important differences between the three feminist theologians, we emphasize the similarities of their feminist understandings of power. In Part I we describe the similarities and differences between Barth's and the feminists' understandings of the nature of power in general. In Part II we

present their differing understandings of the nature, source, and mutual relations of divine and human power. In Part III we evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Barth's and the feminist theologians' reconceptualizations of divine power.

I. THE NATURE OF POWER

A. DOMINATING POWER VERSUS GENERATIVE POWER

Brock, Case-Winters, and Farley each contrast the traditional understanding of power as power which dominates another with true power as power which liberates and generates power in another. Each of the three authors describes a "male view of power" as "unilateral power." With this male conception of power, Case-Winters believes people see the world as a universe of isolated atoms, using images of hierarchy and separation. Beings exist as isolated, autonomous selves. Developing connections with others is a secondary aspect of one's being; setting boundaries and separating the self apart from and against the other is stressed (1990:177-179).

In contrast, Brock says the relation of selves in the male conception of power is a "fusion of selves." Affected by this conception, we are unable to see either ourselves or others as truly "other," as unique, whole, and separate persons. Their different though complementary perceptions of the male conception of the world lead both Case-Winters and Brock to conclude that the notion of beings *as distinct beings-in-unity, of persons who develop their distinctive identity precisely by and in their relations with others, is lost* (Brock 1988:11, 20).

Within this view of beings as separate entities, power is seen as an attribute or commodity which a person can possess. Moreover, it is a finite commodity. The male view of power as domination is based on a systems theory that has a "zero-sum" concept of power. The only way a person can increase his or her power is to gain it from someone else (Case-Winters 1990:31, 87; Brock 1988:27). This understanding of power as finite encourages a dualistic and adversarial outlook on social relations: a person sees her- or

himself as “over against” the other person in the drive for power. Competition is highly emphasized, for one’s power can be protected and increased only if one hones one’s skills of “winning” through dominating and controlling the other who is perceived as one’s opponent. Intimacy is perceived as dangerous to one’s power, for boundaries and defenses must be upheld if one is to protect one’s cache of power. In all interactions of power, the point is to “beat the other,” to diminish her or his power and thereby increase one’s own.

Such attempts at domination might take the form of competitive overwhelming or a patronizing “caring for.” The point of power interactions is not to create a third good or resource of power in which both persons can share. There can be no “sharing,” for a person either wins or loses in power interactions. This male conception is, as Case-Winters pointedly describes it, “an alienated paradigm of power” (1990:196).

What is power in this male paradigm? Power is the ability to get one’s way, to cause another person or structure in society or object in nature to do what you wish, regardless of what they wish (Brock 1988:27–30, 36). It is the ability to do everything one wishes, to be totally “in control” and “all-determining.” Power as domination is unidirectional and unilateral, for the powerful one is able to influence the will and acts of others without being influenced. One gains power by assertion, aggression, even violence.

Farley in particular emphasizes this aspect of violence, terror, and coercion in the attempts to gain dominating power. Other persons are seen only as objects—as a means to an end or as an obstacle to be overcome in the attainment of one’s end. The “powerful one” works upon, for, or against this “other,” but never *with* him or her as a partner or full subject (Farley 1990:85–86; Case-Winters 1990:33). As Brock says, the “powerful one” attempts to fuse the other’s self into his or her own, to enslave and disempower and annihilate the other’s self, leaving only his or her self with any importance (1988:11, 20). The one who has gained power at the expense of another then tries to cement these relations into permanent asymmetrical roles of domination and subordination.

This view of power reflects and supports a patriarchal society. It is based on images of the monarchical lord controlling his vassals and subjects, or the patriarchal father controlling his wife and children, who are his 'property,' who have no legal or social status apart from him.

Brock, Case-Winters, and Farley each see this concept of power as a sinful corruption of true power. While a unilateral view of power sees power as a limited commodity or attribute which can be possessed by isolated individuals, Brock argues that all power in the universe has a single source: the connections which naturally exist between all beings in creation. Power has its source in relationality, in interconnectedness. Dominating power is not the ultimate power; it is, rather, only a subset of this fundamental power of connectedness . . . and a distorted, destructive, and ultimately weak subset at that. "Even controlling power draws its life from relationships rather than from an isolated self (Brock 1988:38)."

Brock uses family relationships to explicate how our connections to other beings are the source or conduit for all power in our lives, including both damaging and creative, healing powers. For Brock, the deepest and earliest note of human life is not sin, but grace. "Original grace" is the grace of ours and of all life's interconnectedness. Our world is not a collection of isolated beings who find their identity alone, apart from others. Rather, each being is only a being-in-relationship. The "graciousness" of life is found in that we are born into and "come to be" through the support, love, and connectedness of other beings. "We can only come into flower with connections to other self-accepting selves. This relationality is the terrifying and redemptive grace of the character of being human (Brock 1988:24)." The image of "original grace" is found in the image of a woman giving birth: we do not come into this world alone, but through the efforts, support, and nurturing of others, . . . through being connected-to-others.

Although "original grace," the interconnectedness of life, is the source of support, power, and the nurturing of life, it is paradox-

ically also the source of our utter vulnerability to becoming broken (Brock 1988:7, 9, 17, 24, 26, 76). Like a pot, we are dropped and broken by those who carry us. Brock describes the process of damage in the family. Because “being” is “being-with,” because our sense of self is formed by relationships with others, the self needs others to develop. A developing self needs people to meet her or his physical, emotional, and sensory needs (to give what the child needs to take in). And the self needs people to receive, acknowledge, and affirm the self’s own feelings (to receive the expressions of the child’s self). If this happens, a child will know her or his “true self.”

But these needs of the self for development are largely unmet in Euro-American culture, Brock says (1988:11). If parents do not have a strong sense of themselves, they turn the child into an *object* to fill their own needs instead of treating the child as a *subject* separate from themselves. This Brock calls the “fusion of selves.” The parent may send a variety of messages to the child: “Bury your feelings—sensuality, anger, jealousy—because I am burying mine. Your feelings remind me of my repressed feelings.” Or, “Love me and fill the emptiness left by my parents.” Or, “Be the person I wanted myself to be. Thus I can project my desire for success onto you and forget my sense of failure.” The child, to gain the love and attention it needs, buries its “true self” and becomes the object the parents desired. The child creates a “false self” oriented toward others, either through becoming highly empathetic toward others’ needs and thus unable to admit or feel its own feelings, or through attempting to win the approval of others through achievement.

Having become accustomed to living in our false selves as children, as adults we often fail to get back to our true selves and we end up making the same mistakes our parents made. We take the role of the powerful parent and hurt others as we were hurt, dominating the weak “because they deserve it.” Child abuse, wife abuse, militarism, and racism stem from this. Or we take the role of the abused child, reenacting the abuse on the self, hurting ourselves, and thinking that we deserve it. What we learned in our

parent-child relations and repeat in our own lives is the view that power is dominating force without the content of justice. Our reenactments of the powerful parent or the powerless child are stop gaps to keep our loneliness, sense of failure, emptiness, and depression over the brokenheartedness of our true self from breaking through the walls we have built and overcoming us.

What, then, is able to heal the brokenheartedness of our true selves? What is able to free our true selves from their "fusion with other selves" and from replaying their destructive roles of domination and submission? What is able to liberate us from the cycle of dominating power and restore our true power? Brock, Case-Winters, and Farley each make it clear that power as domination cannot accomplish this. Only the power of love can restore us to our true selves. Brock says only a two-fold journey, a journey into the self and a journey into the intimacy of connections with others, can lead to the healing of the true self, of our heart. Individuals must move into the center of their woundedness, feel their pain, and relive the painful experiences. They must grieve over those who have hurt them and over how they have hurt themselves and others.

The journey inward must be intertwined with a journey into the intimacy of relationships. To develop the self, the person also needs a connection with an "other," someone to listen and to accept him or her. Otherwise, the pain is too frightening to unbury (Brock 1988:12, 16, 23).

Finding our heart requires a loving presence who helps the search, who is not afraid of the painfulness of the search, and who can mirror back our buried and broken heart, returning us to a healing memory of our earliest pain and need for love. This loving presence and healing memory carry the profoundest meanings of forgiveness and remembrance. (Brock 1988:17)

In this two-fold journey, anger remembered and expressed is a powerful agent for healing the heart. It is in anger that the self reasserts itself, reclaims itself. The true self emerges and speaks

the truth: "I am an 'I'! These false selves are not me, and have no right to run my life."

The powerful love of other persons, by encouraging our journeys of remembering and re-experiencing anger and grieving, enables us "to perceive ourselves as distinct, to claim our feelings, to heal our pain, and to find our own centered existence" (Brock 1988:19). The power of connectedness, which both "wells up within our hearts" and emerges from "the touching of heart to heart" (1988:36–37, 45, 81), restores our own power to forgive and reclaim ourselves. Once our own centered existence and power are restored, we are able to generate true intimacy with other brokenhearted selves instead of continuing the cycle of fusing selves. Erotic power can move through our compassionate love to heal others.

For Brock, true power is not the power of domination; rather, it is the power of mutual connectedness. Unilateral power is weak because it is based on individuals who are "psychically small and brittle," afraid of losing their power or afraid of the wounds buried inside themselves (1988:38). Since a person's power is only as strong as its bonds, the bonds between persons in unilateral power are weak, for they are based only on fear. Optimum power is the power gained from two individuals who have both made the "two-fold journey," the journey into themselves and the journey "between" that "touches each other's hearts." It is the power gained through self-possession and connection to others. When two full persons mutually give, receive, and support each other, the sense of selves and the bonds created are stronger than any other bonds, certainly than bonds created by domination. "For if we choose some element of domination, no matter how benevolent, we reduce the presence of the other in the relationship, and thereby diminish the creativity of connection and the wonder and mystery of erotic power" (Brock 1988:39).

What so sharply distinguishes the traditional male view of power as "dominating power" from the feminist view of power? While power as domination is seen as a finite commodity to be fought over, the power of mutual connectedness is not a zero-sum power.

Rather, the increase in power for one increases the power for the other, for power is located in the mutual relationship and is not a commodity that can be owned. Power creates the connections between all beings of creation. Connecting generates and increases power. Relational power grows to the extent that we remain open and committed to relationships, to receiving and giving, to sharing, mutuality and reciprocity.

Case-Winters emphasizes strongly that relational power is limitless within the web of interconnections. When one person empowers another, the supply of power available to all increases. "Power is an expansive phenomenon, like love, that is increased, not reduced, by being shared or given away" (1990:197). True power is *synergistic* because it cooperates with the natural powers and distinctive identity of the other, rather than overpowering them. The energies of the generating power and the other's power are combined. This creates more energy from which to draw than the sum of the two earlier powers (Case-Winters 1990:179, 197).

Case-Winters uses the female power of reproductivity, caring, and nurturing to imagine this generative power which creates synergy. It is "the power of breasts, belly, hips, of birth and rebirth" (1990:192). The mother, in cooperating with and adding her power to the power of the child, creates more power. In this view of power, no one needs to fear giving power to another, for more power is created in the person's self-giving. In contrast, when the power of domination is used to control and destroy the subjectivity and power of another, power resources degenerate rather than increase (1990:179).

True power is "erotic power," Brock says. It is the power of powerful love, which gives life, heals brokenheartedness, and thus creates new communities of inclusiveness, mutuality, and justice. In freeing the imprisoned powers within others, it generates more power. Even more strongly than Brock, Farley speaks of the transformative, efficacious power of "connectedness" (Brock) and "the female power of birth and nurturing" (Case-Winters) as the power of compassionate love. In compassion, a person stands in solidarity with other subjects whose spirits have been

broken by radical suffering. In suffering with them and delighting in them, compassionate love mediates and mirrors the dignity, value, beauty, and self-respect of others, thereby uncovering the wounded spirit's true self. Compassionate power restores the freedom and self-respect of others, increasing their own "interior power" and enabling them to resist their dehumanization (Farley 1990:86–87). In direct contrast to the male view of power as domination which seeks to annihilate the other's self, the power of compassionate love is a power that "gives people their own power, thus overcoming dependence and despair" (Farley 1990:86).

The strength of Brock's, Case-Winters', and Farley's discussions of the nature of power lies in their dogged pursuit to unmask the violence and weakness of dominating power and in their detailed, imaginative descriptions of powerful love as power of a different kind. Karl Barth similarly castigates the deceptive and destructive conception of power as the power of domination and declares that true power is power of a different order.

Barth's understanding of true power emerges first in his concept of the triunity of God. The inner life of the Trinity is one of distinction-in-unity. There is relationship in God, community in God, for within God's inner being there exists the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. These distinctions are essential to God (1957:360, 414; cf. also 333, 350, 364–365, 371).

Barth does not begin with a definition of "person" as "a discrete center of consciousness, will and act" who then decides to enter into community. For Barth, these persons in God are precisely persons-in-relationship. "Where there is difference there is also fellowship," Barth writes (1957:370). He does not speak of God as an Isolated Monad, nor of a fusion of the three persons, but rather of the "co-presence" rather than "identity" of the three modes of being, of their "perichoresis," "co-existence," "dwelling in one another." Barth speaks of the "distinctive differentiation" *and* the "distinctive fellowship" of the Father and Son, of "the inter-community of Father, Son and Spirit in their essence and work."

Barth uses these terms to prevent two dangers in the understanding of the persons: involution, the blurring of distinctions

into “sameness”; and also extreme autonomy, where the three persons are seen as going their own way in complete independence. Instead, Barth describes the persons as “one in their distinction,” as having “unity in their particularity,” as being “fellowship, not fusion” (1957:397–398).

In *Journeys by Heart*, Brock criticizes the Trinity doctrine because she believes it reflects the notion of power as domination, for the Father demands the “fusion” of the Son and the Spirit into his self (1988:xii, 50, 54). Barth’s strong emphasis that the persons of the Trinity share a “perichoretic” or “interpermeating” form of unity significantly challenges Brock’s claim of the uselessness of the Trinity doctrine for reconceptualizing the nature of personhood and power. For Barth, divine power, unlike creaturely power, is inherent. God does not receive it as a gift or depend upon another being for it. Within the triune life of God, the nature of each person’s power is “perichoretic.” The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each receive their life, being, and power from the other two as a gift. In this sense, even within God, genuine power for a person is power received as a gift. To say that each of the triune persons “shares power” does not mean that each has only partial power. Rather, each has power only in and by and through the other persons. Within the fellowship of the three persons of the Trinity, power is seen as the power of interpermeating love, of giving and receiving life and being from another, of self-identity of person nurtured and encompassed within the web of connections to others.

Second, in the incarnation and cross of Christ, true power is not a power which overcomes the other or denies the distinct reality of the other (1957:504, 507, 512–513, 516). For Barth, true power is the power of freely given love. It is the binding of suffering love to the distinct life of the other in such a way that one does not overwhelm, coerce or “fuse” the other to his- or herself, but also “does not let the other go” or cease the call for the renewal of the other’s life and power (1957:514).

God has created the structure of creaturely life to reflect the beauty of God’s own life. Barth thus conceives creaturely life as

one of radical interdependence. In our “being with and for others,” our lives reflect the life of Christ who lived in solidarity with others. They reflect the inner life of the trinitarian persons, which is the source of all life. In the true life of creatures within the kingdom of God, power is shared and is therefore a mutually empowering power. There is no reason to fear the power of another, for the increased freedom of one does not decrease the freedom of another.

The power of the future kingdom is “the promise of a very different power on which our concept of power is necessarily broken” (Barth 1991:407). If humans are allowed to define “power” on their own terms, apart from the revelation of true power in Jesus Christ and in the trinitarian relations, they will inevitably end up with power as “power in itself” (1957:524–525). Human power is distorted by sin into unilateral, dominating power through which humans seek to control others (sin as pride) or fail to realize their potential (sin as sloth). Both deny the true reality of power (sin as falsehood). This conception of power as domination, as a limited commodity which can be possessed and which allows control over others, is not power as created by God. Rather, Barth says, it is of the devil (1957:524–525).

B. BASIC DEFINITIONS OF POWER

In their rejection of dominating power in favor of the generative power of mutual love, the four theologians share much common ground. But are these authors still working from the same basic definition of power?

Barth defines power traditionally as the ability to effect an end according to one’s will. It is the ability to accomplish real possibilities (1957:403). The three feminist authors, however, give three different basic definitions of power. Like Barth, Farley describes power as “the ability to effect something in the world” (1990:86). With dominating power, a person attempts to execute his or her will by working for or over or against the will of another. Compassionate power, on the other hand, interacts with the other’s will to

achieve a desired end. Case-Winters similarly implies that power is the ability to bring about an event according to one's will. Power is the ability to influence the decisions and behavior of another according to one's own will, even though this "influential power" depends upon an equally strong "receptive power": the ability to receive the previous acts and desires of other agents (Case-Winters 1990:209). What primarily distinguishes true power from dominating power is that an agent using true power effects her or his will through persuasion rather than through coercion.

In contrast to Farley and Case-Winters, Brock is ambiguous in her definition of power. In her desire to speak of power in ways which give no connotation of a "determination" of one person's acts by another's will, Brock seemingly rejects the definition of power as the ability of an agent to accomplish an end in the world according to his or her will. Speaking of power in nondeterminist language, Brock describes power as "energy" or as the ability to "empower" another's freedom to choose his or her own destiny. Brock even rejects process theology's view of power based on "persuasion," for persuasion also implies the attempt of one person to preempt the free choices of another in favor of one's own will (1988:34).

Yet at times even Brock speaks of power as the ability to effect a willed end. She speaks of erotic power as "leading us," or as an "energy which compels us" to do certain actions (1988:41, 42, 45). While the adjectival meaning of *compel* includes the notion of an object being "irresistibly attractive" to another, suggesting a luring toward the good, the verb means primarily "to force or drive to a course of action" or "to secure or bring about by force" or "to overpower" (*American College Dictionary*). However, this idea of power as involving personal willing to an end is clouded because she often speaks of erotic power through impersonal metaphors such as "energy" (1988:41, 45). Erotic power is like a "wave" that "pushes" us, she writes (1988:105–106). It is not clear from her discussion whether or not Brock means to argue that the erotic power which "leads us" is the power of a personal agent.

II. DIVINE AND HUMAN POWER

Brock, Case-Winters, Farley, and Barth each reject unilateral, dominating power as an ingenuine and demonic form of power. They describe true power as power of a different order. This power is mutually given and received by creatures. Precisely in being given away, the power of love generates “interior power” in another. With such broad agreement concerning the nature of power, how then do the authors understand the relation between divine and human power?

As each of the authors rejects a notion of power as coercive power which destroys the self of the other in order to get its way, so each rejects a concept of divine power built upon coercion. Brock claims that the Christian tradition has usually described God as a tyrant who attempts to annihilate human selves through his omnipotent, dominating power (1988:xii, 49–50, 52–55). The “patriarchal father-god’s” goal is to fuse the child’s self to the father, to deny the “otherness” of the child, just as broken human parents do to their children (Brock 1988:54–57). This image of “the punitive control-oriented parent”—whose goal is to “deny persons their full humanity”—uses authoritarian and punitive images of divine power (Brock 1988:50). This God uses tools of reward and punishment to destroy the will of the child, to “foster dependence in the child” (Brock 1988:54). This God is a cosmic tyrant, argues Brock, and this view of God is supported and reflected in a patriarchal society steeped in violence.

In similar ways, Farley, Case-Winters, and Barth denounce the concept of a God whose power is based upon force. God’s power is not a power that dehumanizes people. Divine power does not dominate, order, manipulate, or use violence and terror against others, destroying what it thwarts (Farley 1990:86). God is not the “male separative ego,” Case-Winters writes, complete in itself, omnipotent, who as “King, Lord and Father” can be omnipotent and reign only by forcing humans into permanent roles of subjection and humiliation (1990:179). The image of God as holy warrior, leading his people out of Egypt and destroying the Egyptian armies, presents this “paradigm of domination requiring

subjection” (Case-Winters 1990:174). Because power is a limited commodity, this tyrant God is fearful of gains in power by humans and demands absolute control to maintain his status, glory, and power. Barth argues that God is not a capricious tyrant who manipulates human beings as though they are “mere chess pieces” (1957:524; 1991:403, 408–409). God does not desire to be the sole cause of all things, like some unrelenting despot.

Though these four authors agree in their rejection of God as a “cosmic tyrant,” the feminist theologians use a different definition of *tyrant* than does Barth. Brock, Case-Winters, and Farley assert that the notion of “absolute power,” the power to control the end of events, is directly opposed to the notion of “interactive power” which must work *with* others to determine ends. For them, a tyrant God is simply a God who has controlling power. But while the feminist authors see divine controlling power as a concept which negates the possibility of a cooperative power shared between God and humans, Barth places the two powers in a dynamic relationship.

Due to the power of sin, humans on their own are not able to cooperate with God’s power. But God, who has a form of power which is not conditioned by anything outside God, acts for humans to create the possibility of humans working with God’s power. The human power to cooperate with God is received as a gift from God. Barth does not see divine control and cooperative power as opposed, as do the feminist authors. Rather, there is a *movement* from divine control to divine-human cooperation. For Barth, a tyrant God would be capricious or would seek divine ends to the exclusion of human needs. It would be a God whose glory derives from humiliating humans, destroying their powers and leaving them helpless. But God is not tyrannical simply because God’s power is unlimited, as the feminist authors claim. Rather, for Barth, God’s power “over and for” humans takes the shape of divine humiliation, of costly self-giving love, in which the goal is the elevation of humans to their own glory beside God.

As they define a “tyrannical God” differently, so Barth and the feminist theologians differ widely in their reconceptions of God as

cosmic tyrant who wields dominating power. In *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* Kathryn Tanner explains how the Christian scriptures and tradition present two rules or boundaries for determining acceptable statements concerning the relation between divine sovereignty and human power. In statements about God's relation to humans, God must be seen as radically transcending creation and as acting in a superior way in and through creaturely acts. Second, creatures must be seen as operating on their own, and humans as free and thus responsible for the character of their lives (Tanner 1988:1, 46, 79). Tanner claims that despite their tense relation, the two rules must be held together. Brock, Case-Winters, and Farley, however, believe that the two rules are not merely paradoxical; they are contradictory.

In their attempt to deny a tyrannical conception of divine power, the feminist authors suggest two possible moves. First, they deny the qualitative distinction and superiority of God's power over creaturely power. In what they call a "social conception" of the God-world relation, God is not radically transcendent over creation. God is not the source of all things, nor a God whose life, power, and agency exist on a different plane from the power and agency of creatures. Rather, both God and creatures exist within the same plane or "web of connections" of life, power, and agency.

Case-Winters says God is "interdependent with the creation" (1990:179). Using "the metaphysical framework of process thought fleshed out by images of feminist thought" (1990:204), Case-Winters asserts that "there is no primary and absolute differentiation between God and the world" (1990:206), nor is there an absolute differentiation between divine and human power. There are no "dichotomies" in the world, not even a dichotomy between God and creation. Rather, God is one power among others within the same "web of connectedness." These other powers metaphysically limit God's power (1990:208).

By placing God within the web of connections which includes creation, the feminist theologians are able to affirm that God has

power, but that God does not have absolute, unconditioned power, for creatures also have their own inherent power. Behind this drive to limit the scope of God's power and to define creaturely power as "inherent power" is the belief that true power cannot be power accepted as a gift (as Barth argues). It must be inherent to be genuine. "To be is to have [intrinsic] power," rather than power derived from someone or someplace else, writes Sheila Greeve Davaney in a work accepted extensively by Case-Winters (Davaney 1986:145). With "a social notion of power," both God and the world must have "intrinsic power" (Davaney 1986:142–143). Even in events of salvation, humans have their own "intrinsic power," which then works with God's own metaphysically conditioned power to bring about saving events. Case-Winters believes that the doctrine of "salvation by faith alone," which implies that "there is nothing we can do" to save ourselves, is a "strength-destroying view of God" (Case-Winters 1990:185). Similarly, Brock asserts that we cannot rely on "outside powers" (1988:2, 9, 24) or "a higher power" (1988:55–57) for our own healing. For Farley, divine saving power is necessarily conditioned by human agency, which, with its own inherent power and under the influence of evil, may eternally resist God's power (1990:124, 131).

God's power is not "absolute" or unconditioned because God does not transcend creation. Rather, God lives within the web of connectedness wherein both God and the world have intrinsic and conditioned forms of power. Events of power are "synergistic." God's partial power and the creature's partial power combine to create more power (Case-Winters 1990:197). Divine power is "superior" to creaturely power not because it exists on a different plane of agency and is thus unconditioned, but because God's power, while the same type of power as creaturely power and existing within the same plane of power as creaturely power, is "more influential" and because God is "tireless" (Case-Winters 1990:215–216). God's power is superior to creaturely power because it is quantitatively greater. But God's ability to defeat evil and fulfill God's redemptive purposes is dependent upon the free response of creatures who possess intrinsic power. At the very least, Farley asserts, God will never absolutely redeem creation.

Brock, Case-Winters, and Farley at times deny the absolute superiority of divine power to create room for intrinsic power in creatures, thus denying God of tyrannical power. At other times they stop speaking of God as a personal agent at all, thereby defusing conceptions of God as a cosmic, manipulative tyrant. Brock in particular uses impersonal metaphors to speak of God, thus avoiding the question of whether God is an agent who has the requisite power to fulfill divine purposes. At times, she describes divine reality as “the connections” between a broken heart and one’s true self and a broken heart and other hearts (1988:33–34). God is “energy” or the “erotic power” which flows within the connections. At other times, Brock describes God as the *source* of this erotic power (1988:39–45). What is clear in Brock is that when humans experience the healing power of connectedness, they experience “divine reality.” But is this divine reality an impersonal “energy” or “groundwell” of power, or is it a personal agent who wills this healing and then determines its fulfillment? This question she leaves unanswered.

It is on the question of an appropriate alternative to the conception of God as a cosmic tyrant that Barth and the feminist theologians part ways fundamentally. Barth would describe the feminists’ alternative to the tyrannical conception of God as the way of “the Pelagians” and “Molinists” (1957:562, 569). The fundamental move which Brock, Case-Winters, and Farley make is to deny the “radical transcendence” of God over creation. They thereby dissolve the two rules for speech about the relation between divine and human activity which Kathryn Tanner claims the tradition must keep if its language is truly to reflect the God and creation of the scriptures. For Tanner, the rules for speech are “tensive” precisely to describe a relation between divine and human activity which is “free” on both sides, not tense or competitive.

Once they place God with creatures within the same plane of agency, the feminist authors make one of two moves to protect the integrity of human agency in relation to divine agency. They either describe divine and creaturely agency as mutually conditioning

one another by metaphysical necessity or they deny that God is a personal agent who brings about particular willed ends in and through creaturely agency. God provides a “general power” for human agency, a power which humans then employ to determine their own willed ends.

For Barth, however, God acts *preeminently* in the saving events of scripture in such a way that human power and agency is expanded and transformed. This is the hallmark of scripture’s witness to God. Particularly in those saving events, God is revealed as ontologically transcending creation in power and agency. Barth’s commitment to his understanding of the biblical witness does not allow him to embrace the alternative to the tyrannical God which the feminist authors adopt. Barth maintains Tanner’s two rules and their tensive quality for all speech about the relation between divine and human power. God acts through creaturely actions. At the same time, creatures act freely. Instead of reconceiving divine power by either conditioning God’s power or replacing personal with impersonal metaphors for God, Barth makes two moves of his own. First, Barth gains his understanding of divine power from the specific saving events of scripture that reveal true power as the power of God. Second, Barth redefines true power—divine and human—as “the power to serve God’s glory.”

Barth clearly understands true power as a power which is shared between beings and which is mutually empowering. As we said earlier, Barth conceives the inner life of the Trinity as one of distinction-in-unity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are persons-in-relationship. Thus the power held by the persons is not a commodity that is divided and possessed independently by each. Nor is the power within the trinitarian relations the power of domination. As Brock rightly says, this would negate the fellowship and involve a fusing of two of the divine persons into the third. Rather, their power is a shared power, “co-present” in each, the power of interpenetrating life and love which sees the other as distinct yet embraces it. Barth says the triune God is omnipotent “in the power by which He is the One by and in the Other, all being equal in origin, necessity and glory” (1957:529). Just as life

within the Trinity is shared life, so power is not isolating, dominating power, but shared and mutually empowering power.

Besides identifying true power as the power found within the life of the Trinity, Barth makes a second move: God's power, as real power, is "the power to serve God's glory."

"Power is in every sense a right concept for God," Barth writes, "but we have to realize that it is a very different power from any known to us—a power that serves his glory" (1991:406). Barth's move to identify power as "the power to serve God's glory" means three things for his concept of divine power. God's "power to serve God's glory" means first that God has the power to will and cause God's self and the power to will and cause all else for fellowship with God (1991:406). God has the power unilaterally to cause God's own life. From this power of God's aseity, God has the power to create all real possibilities, "all things which serve God's glory." The things which "serve God's glory" are the things which reflect the beauty of God's own life of fellowship within the Trinity. All real power is power which creates analogies to the triune fellowship, both within creation and between God and creation.

God's power is the power to cause God's own life and to fulfill all "real possibilities." This means for Barth that divine power is precisely the power of God's constancy. God's power is the power to be God's self, to be constant, and thus the power to bind God's self freely to the world and to create in the world and in God's relation to the world analogies which reflect the beauty of the mutual love of the triune life. It is not God's relative size or access to tools of coercion that is the source of God's power. Nor is our own relatively small size the source of our impotence. Rather, Barth describes God's constancy as the source of God's power and our inconstancy as the source of our human impotence. The optimum power of any being is the power to act according to its nature, to maintain its integrity. All other powers, including the male power of domination, are not strong but weak. They destroy themselves by acting against the law of their nature. Human impotence derives from denying constantly who we are, thus weakening ourselves (Barth 1991:408).

Barth's understanding of divine power as the power of God's constancy connects well with Brock's discussion of erotic power and the damage which occurs to children in family life. God's power is "real power," a power which qualitatively transcends our power precisely because God has what we humans in our social relations do not have: a community of love that enables a constancy of self for those within that community. Within the inner life of the Trinity, the love of the Son and Holy Spirit for the Father enables the "true self" of the Father to remain constant, full, and open to others (and likewise for the Son and Spirit). There is both self-affirmation and affirmation of the other as "other" among the three persons. Thus, no split develops in God between a "true" and "false" self, nor does God fall into the cycle of dominating power into which humans inevitably fall. God's power transcends human power because God alone has the "peace" and fullness of life and love within God's own life which enables God's love to overflow in the creation of analogies to God's life in the world and in the affirmation of those other lives.

Barth defines God's power as the power to cause God's self and all "real" possibilities. It is the power of God's constancy. Barth finally defines it as a personal relational power. The power of a tyrant, Barth says, is "a power which turns us into objects" (1957:547). The tyrant attempts to have "pure power and causality" which confronts us "with the dead weight of a falling stone" (1957:588, 597). But God's power is the power of God's person and Spirit. God's power is not a power which overpowers us, but the power of a Someone who comes in our midst and addresses us: "I am the Lord thy God."

In one key passage, Barth reveals that God's power is not the power of mechanical causation, but the power of love that has its roots in the love and power shared amongst the persons of the Trinity and that comes beside others in creation as the power of personal love.

It [God's power] is not a power that cannot endure another beside it. On the contrary, it is the power of the eternal love in which before all worlds God is not only

full of power in Himself but as Father and Son always has power in another. (1957:538)

Within God's own life, power is not a limited commodity. Rather, power is shared and generates power in others. Thus, while God is the source of all true power, God is no tyrant who wills to hold onto all power. God's power is a powerful love that enables renewing power to emerge within our lives.

III. EVALUATION

The strength of Brock's, Case-Winters', and Farley's discussions of divine power is that, more clearly than Barth, they describe and denounce power as domination, revealing its damaging effect within social relations. They expand on the nature of true power as the power of compassionate love more than does Barth. They leave no room for doubt that divine power is the power of love and they provide maternal metaphors for understanding God's power in relation to creaturely power. Barth relies almost exclusively on the images of father, lord, and king for speaking of divine power, though he does include the image of friend (1957:511) and he redefines the meanings of "father, lord, and king" to convey correctly the meaning of divine power (1957:500–512).

The strength of Barth's position, in contrast to the positions of Brock, Case-Winters, and Farley, is that Barth rejects notions of divine power as dominating power and reconceives divine power as shared and generative power in such a way that Barth affirms rather than dissolves the biblical tension of the two rules for speech about the relation between divine and human power. Barth's particular reconception of divine power as generative power reflects the biblical witness to saving events wherein humans experience the preeminent power and actions of God as graciously enabling their own power to act. Within the inner life of the Trinity, power is shared and mutually empowering. Within created life, creatures are constituted by their relationships and find their power within those connections. In God's relation to creatures, God's power is not a male type of dominating power.

Rather, it is generative power. Human power is not denied, but activated by God's power, for God desires humans to be co-creators in the building of God's kingdom (1957:107–112).

But humans in their relation to God, according to Barth, have no "inherent power." On this point Barth and the feminist theologians sharply contradict each other. Case-Winters denounces the doctrine of "salvation by faith alone" as a "strength-destroying view of God" because denying that humans have inherent power means denying that they have genuine power. She thus places God and creatures within the same level of reality, each with their own sources of inherent power, which, when combined, generate "synergy."

Barth does not deny that the interaction of God and humans generates power. But while the feminist authors see God and humans both as partial sources of this generated power, Barth believes that God alone is the source of this interaction and power. We partake of this power only as we live in God. God's power is "absolute" and human power is "gifted power" (1991:408). God alone is the source of empowering power, not God *and* myself as a human with inherent power. Yet, because God has bound God's self to me and desires that I have power, I too have power in my connection to God. And to have power as a gift from God is not demeaning. Rather, human persons who have their power as a gift reflect and correspond to the triune persons who have their divine power from, by, and through each other.

In the end, this notion of "gifted power" irreconcilably divides the feminist authors and Barth. For the feminists, to receive power from another who has absolute power is an oppressive, patriarchal idea. For Barth, only the idea of gifted power can correspond to the Christian experience of empowerment and grace in God's saving acts in scripture. Precisely because God acts freely, gracefully, and with preeminent power for us and in us, we experience a new power in our lives.

All four authors denounce coercive power as demonic. All strongly assent that God is not a tyrant who controls creatures by destroying their own wills and powers. Divine power is generative

power, which Case-Winters rightly describes as “the power of breasts, belly, hips, of birth and re-birth” (1990:192). Barth vigorously redefined male metaphors for divine power, such as “father,” “lord,” and “king,” but his use of feminine metaphors for divine power is virtually nonexistent. The focused intensity and imaginative use of metaphors in the feminist authors’ reconceptions of divine power as generative power provide necessary content to the reconstruction of our understanding of power, both divine and human. But it is Barth, not Brock, Case-Winters, or Farley, who, with his notion of creaturely power as power which is received as a gift, provides the theological reconstruction of divine and human power with the form necessitated by the witness to God’s saving acts in scripture and tradition.

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Paulo Freire's Liberationist Pedagogy and Christian Education

A Critical Investigation of Compatibility

ROBERT K. MARTIN

Twenty-two years have passed since the publication of the English translation of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* introduced American educators to a Latin American, liberationist education. Unfortunately, Freire's challenge to transmissive, hierarchically structured pedagogies of mainstream educators has been largely ignored. Interest in Freire's literacy education has been minimal among educators in general, sporadic among religious educators, and almost negligible in the local church's educational ministries. Notable exceptions to this unfortunate state of affairs are religious educators, Thomas Groome, Daniel Schipani, and William B. Kennedy, among others, all of whom have sought to bring a liberationist orientation to North American religious education. But although these individuals have been seeking to foster a convergence of liberationist and religious education in North America, liberationist religious education has been attempted only rarely and intermittently in few local churches.

I am disheartened by the lack of interest by the majority of religious educators in educational pedagogies that empower the laity to change the structures and dynamics of personal, societal, and religious oppression in their context. For those of us living in the United States, the need for radical action that addresses the

systemic roots of our cultural ills has never been more urgent. Our society, as well as many Christian denominations, is now in the midst of widespread social and ideological conflicts wreaking severe hardship and tragedy upon many. Conflicts over sexism and racism, over class inequities, and over ecological issues threaten to unravel our threadbare social fabric.

For example, economic and political inequities between the races were vividly demonstrated in the recent Rodney King verdict and its violent aftermath. In an ecclesiological context, the antipathies between the pro-life and pro-choice positions and between gay rights advocates and “gender traditionalists” threaten irreconcilable divisions in many denominations. I need not detail the continuous and systematic erosion of the middle class and the swelling ranks of the impoverished due to governmental collusion with multinational, corporate interests. Alongside these and other societal and denominational conflicts, we personally experience systematic dehumanization and denigration by societal institutions and in our personal relations. In the face of this dehumanization, churches must try to foster an understanding of the complexities involved in these conflicts and to instigate constructive, transformative action from a Christian perspective.

A liberationist educational agenda is needed not only in the two-thirds world—and not only for those who suffer economic hardship. While a liberationist praxis is certainly meant for these oppressed, it is also pertinent to the struggles of those who are ignorant of and suffering from the systematic oppression pervading all dimensions of society. Those mired in depressive hopelessness and aimlessness need liberation as well as those who are struggling for life’s subsistence.

This article is an attempt to encourage the reader to investigate Freire’s pedagogy and to assess its viability for her or his particular ecclesial setting, whether that be a church, an informal religious gathering, or an academic institution. In the following paragraphs the reader will be introduced to the central tenets of Freire’s literacy education and to the process by which it can be called

liberationist. Then in an attempt to take seriously the dialogue between liberationist education and religious education, the essay will reflect critically upon the adequacy of Freire's pedagogy in an ecclesial setting.

What I am suggesting is that Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed is limited in its transformative potential by its ideological commitments. Committed to a Marxist economic social analysis, Freire's educational pedagogy does not consider the need for change within the ranks of the proletariat, among the communities of the oppressed. There is little *self-reflection* in the process of critical reflection. A trinitarian theological orientation in a concrete and specific context would enable liberationist education to transcend its ideological limitations and, in the end, would engender an even more radical dynamism for social change. The conclusion will advocate the importance of liberationist religious education in the church provided that the religious dimension is the controlling element in the overall educational praxis.

I will analyze Freire's educational program primarily through his understanding of *human relationality*. I suggest that Freire's analysis of human relations is too abstract for an uncritical implementation of his educational program in an ecclesial setting. The consequences of this deficiency evidence themselves as a distortion of the dynamics of oppression and a reduction of the redemptive possibilities of revolutionary activity. As I critique Freire and call his educational project to a more theological orientation, I will critique the institutional relations in the church in the same way. The relationships that make up the institutions of the church should also be critiqued and brought within a theological understanding of human relationality. The goal of this exercise is to assess Freire's pedagogy for the purpose of *reconstructing Christian praxis with specific emphasis on the relational structuration of the church*.

This essay is primarily a critical analysis. Much more work needs to be done in reconstructing theologically a liberating educational pedagogy appropriate to the local congregation.

Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed arose as a response to his personal experience of the dehumanizing effects of poverty and of political repression in Brazil. In 1921, he was born into a comfortable middle class family. Yet, because of the Wall Street crash of 1929, the Freire family, along with the majority of the middle class in Brazil, plunged into poverty. Young Paulo grew up knowing the devastating effects of stultifying poverty, social degradation, and the hunger-induced listlessness that sap strength and will.

These experiences led him to dedicate his life to the struggle against oppression through the process of education. Education seemed to him the most effective way to engender authentic liberation for those experiencing political and economic domination.

Although Freire draws upon a wide array of disciplines and theoretical perspectives, he derives his educational and social theory primarily from four sources: Marxist historical materialism, existentialism, humanism, and the Christian tradition, vis-à-vis the Roman Catholic tradition and the liberation theology of Latin America.

Freire's reflection upon his experiences of poverty and the plight of the oppressed in general led him to understand the forces of domination in terms of self-alienation and social powerlessness. Freire relies to a great extent on Erich Fromm's eloquent description of the modern strategies of self-alienation and powerlessness:

[Man] [*sic*] has become free from the external bonds that would prevent him from doing and thinking as he sees fit. He would be free to act according to his own will, if he knew what he wanted, thought, and felt. But he does not know. He conforms to anonymous authorities and adopts a self which is not his. The more he does this, the more powerless he feels, the more is he forced to conform. In spite of a veneer of optimism and initiative, modern man is overcome by a profound

feeling of powerlessness which makes him gaze toward approaching catastrophes as though he were paralyzed.
(Fromm 1961:67)

The essential process of his educational pedagogy is “humanization”: a transcendence of mere adaptation in society through critical “integration with society.” In the progression of a person from a state of complete submergence in social conformity to a critical awareness of structures and dynamics of the social milieu, increasing freedom is the signal characteristic of increasing humanization. The presence of freedom indicates the presence of options for constructive action.

THE NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

According to Freire, oppressed groups exist in various levels of consciousness, from a complete lack of critical consciousness to the capacity to analyze and transform existence. The condition for intentional, transformational action is the ability to relate to the world as something external to oneself, something with which one can be in a relationship.

The key term here is *transivity*: the capacity to objectify the world and to relate reciprocally with it through dialogical communication. Objectification of the world readily occurs in and through language. Language shared in mutually engaging conversation with people in a common socio-political context helps to verify one’s own image of the world and to build a sense of trust in one’s own voice.¹

For Freire, transivity of consciousness also implies an increasing “permeability” of oneself to the interests and actions of others. It signals the highest level of consciousness and social interaction: one is grounded in one’s experience and context and maintains an openness to others. Permeability refers to the reciprocal give

¹ For example, the studies in *Women’s Ways of Knowing* demonstrate the power of conversation about common concerns to build self-esteem and a sense of “voice” in those who have previously been “silent.” Cooperative education that seeks to empower the speech of oppressed women is called “connected knowing.”

and take that characterizes the interaction between two subjects in a dialogical encounter. Further below, I will show that Freire's dialogics is contained in a self-other personalism that overlooks its dependence upon a transcendent context that serves to sustain and characterize the dialogue.

In Freire's system, the movement toward a transitive relationality progresses through three levels of consciousness. The most basic and ahistorical level of consciousness is what Freire terms *semi-intransitive* or *magical consciousness*, in which individuals are unable to analyze and critique the perceived and real boundaries of their social situation. At this level, meaning is embedded in myths that order life and justify reality. All change-oriented activity is directed either at the supranatural realm through magic and the like, or at the individual's personal incapacities. Never is attention given to the structures and dynamics of the social order.

The second level of consciousness, the *naive-transitive* stage, operates out of a simplistic understanding of cause and effect. This level generates some reflection and action but inhibits serious and extensive transformation of social structures. *Naive-transitive* action is characterized more by activism than by true revolutionary praxis. Fully transitive dialogue is held at bay by a practice of polemics, which, if left unchecked, leads to fanaticism (Freire 1973:17-18).

The most advanced level of consciousness involves a *critical transivity* in which the structures of reality are perceived as contingent and are responsive to human endeavor. Within the context of a larger communal association with others, one gains a critical awareness and a motivation to become a "subject" of one's own history and thereby begin "to dynamize, to master, and to humanize reality" (Freire 1973:35). Characteristic of this level of consciousness is a deeper interpretation of reality, a search for causal principles through the verification of revisable propositions, self-critical analysis of bias, and the practice of dialogical and reasoned communication. Freire is careful to add that the development of a critical consciousness is not a "natural by-product of even major economic changes" in the personal or social context. Movement

from magical to naive transitivity may parallel economic development as it did in Brazil. However, the step from naive to critical transitivity is not automatic; it must grow out of a “critical [‘intentional’] educational effort based on favorable historical conditions” (Freire 1973:18–20).

The process of ascendance through these levels of consciousness Freire calls *conscientização*, or *conscientization*.² Conscientization is the deepening of a critical awareness with a concomitant struggle for change, such that people “*emerge* from their *submersion* and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled” (Freire 1970b:100–101). Conscientization is thus a praxis: the educational practices of action and reflection for transforming society.³ This type of awareness incorporates thinking, feeling, and behavior and relates them to an “objective-problematic situation.” A situation includes, most importantly for the process of conscientization, the contradictions within the person’s own existence within socio-linguistic relationality. The mode conscientization assumes in Freire’s project is that of literacy education.

CONSCIENTIZATION AS LITERACY EDUCATION

Emerging from within the personal and social context, the process of conscientization inspires the subject’s creative interaction with his or her existence to solve problems, to act according to a vision of community, and to author personal meaning. Conscientization thus highlights the interconnections between language, politics, and consciousness. Literacy, being the acquisition of linguistic skills, is an essential component in the development of critical awareness. It is an *increasingly skilled activity of naming reality* in which the oppressed get the tools with which to re-present themselves to themselves and others, fulfilling their “ontological vocation” to be makers of history (Freire 1970b:

² Freire voiced his opinion that the term should be kept in its Portuguese form to guard against any form of reductionism (Freire 1974:23–30). I will follow other North American educators by translating the term to English.

³ Marx’s eleventh thesis on Feuerbach states the intent of a liberationist education succinctly: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it” (Marx 1978:145).

chapter 2). In short, conscientization involves personal and corporate action and reflection that seeks to reconstruct history and existential self-understanding.

The process of conscientization moves toward the goal of social transformation by inserting the oppressed individual and groups into history. This process opposes a transmissive, schooling-oriented educational paradigm—what Freire calls the traditional “necrophilic” paradigm of “banking education.” Freire replaces the banking paradigm with a liberative, “biophilic education” within a literacy-conscientization program. Literacy-conscientization fosters a political literacy in which people “read” in order to interpret and understand critically the structures and dynamics of their existence.

While literacy acquisition is a significant concern in North America, one can also understand literacy metaphorically to mean a discriminating understanding with which we critically analyze social phenomena, such as cultural media, consumerist advertising, and bureaucracy. As language acquisition allows people to use language effectively, to discern meanings, and to create language, so media literacy, for example, allows for a more differentiated use and discernment of the media, including the skills needed for creative responses to the media.

THREE LEVELS OF AWARENESS

The *biophilic paradigm* strives toward full humanization, the power to be self-determining. With this aim it seeks to engender three kinds of awareness within the individual and community: awareness of concrete, existential reality, of personal and communal capabilities to change, and of the strategic options within a vision of utopia.

One’s consciousness is raised in a group of committed people with a similar history. Freire calls this a “culture circle,” a setting in which the “participants” and the group’s “coordinator” seek to learn together the “codes” of meaning embedded in their cultural context. The leader or coordinator considers herself to be a student as well in the literacy group. Because of advanced training

and skills, the coordinator is responsible for “tuning in” to the vocabulary of the group. With her help in the first phase of the literacy method, the group searches for words describing social situations of everyday life.

Any word may serve to describe the situation as long as it is existentially charged and phonetically rich. These words are “codified” into visual images of everyday situations that stimulate the participants to become more aware of the conflicts in their context and more passionate about the literacy process. As those in the culture circle consider the particularities of their existence, they awaken to the “limit situations” that restrict their lives and the dynamics of systemic oppression: exploitation, domination, denigration, etc. As they recognize these limits, they discuss them and their implicit themes.

For Freire, themes are the concrete representations of the ideas, concepts, values, and challenges that form the context of the passionate desire for full humanization. Themes are generative in that they lead back to the concrete situation and to other themes. Themes may be organized according to their generality or the time and place from which they emerge. For example, the overarching theme that describes the situation of the two-thirds world is that of *domination* (Freire 1970b:91–93). The concrete reality of domination, however, implies the utopian theme of *liberation*. By addressing existence at this level of abstraction (an abstraction closely tied to the concrete), the participants can structure their world and foster dialogical community among themselves for transformative action.

The second movement toward the goal of conscientization increases awareness of the contradictions in the social context and demystifies the dynamics of cause and effect. An increasing facility with language gives one perspective on the relation of words to meaning and meaning to existence. It shows how one can create words, sentences, and meaning, thereby transforming one’s self-understanding. Freire’s conception of the importance of literacy to one’s subjectivity is similar to that of Hans-Georg Gadamer: as one learns to “play” in the cultural medium of symbols, signs, and

images, one's sense of subjectivity and autonomy grows and becomes stronger. Conversely, an increasing sense of relational reciprocity, transitive subjectivity, and volitional autonomy enhances linguistic skills (Gadamer 1982:91 ff). Wolfhart Pannenberg has also argued for the centrality of "play" in the ongoing generation of cultural forms:

Cultic play is the organizing center of the shared human world and of its unity. . . . In its function as a basis for culture, play is closely connected with specifically human intelligence and with language. Together these lay the foundations of the shared world. (Pannenberg 1985:338-339)

Linguistic cultural play allows one to be creative in every dimension of cultural and social interaction at a primary level. Cultural playfulness allows one to question restrictive patterns of moral reasoning and to understand one's self and the other better within a wider frame of reference, rather than being passively embedded within a conventional morality that serves the strategies of domination by elites (cf. Schipani 1988:21).

Third, conscientization fosters a sense of creativity that extends beyond the present through a process of "recodification." It allows one's imagination to posit *concrete* action for the near and distant future. This type of awareness is activated by a teleological orientation in which the present and past are seen through the lens of the imagined optimal future. In the culture circle, the group imagines solutions to the problems posed during codification and plans specific, concrete action to implement solutions. Again a critical dimension is operative. The present is critiqued in light of the future, and activities are planned and executed so that personal, social, and cultural changes occur in small but significant increments toward an imagined utopia. In this way, awareness of the full spectrum of past, present, and future is translated into action that is then reflected upon for the purpose of radical practice. Radical practice opposes activism that is unreflective, reactionary activity. "Radicalization" differs markedly from sec-

tarianist activism, according to Freire, in that the former is reflective, loving, dialogical, and humble. The latter contradicts the aims of radicalization and can be more destructive than the elitist forms of domination (Freire 1973:10–11; 1970b:40).

The movement toward a fully transitive consciousness and social interaction requires learning about the contingent nature of social and personal realms and imagining possibilities for transformation. Education practiced in this way becomes change-oriented, not only personally but socially, through the revolutionary activity of individuals and groups.

IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS ON FREIRE'S PEDAGOGY

In the preceding presentation of Freire's pedagogy of conscientization, I have selected those aspects of his theory that alter positively the way most North American local churches educate. With the concrete Christian ministries of education and social witness, Freire's praxis of revolutionary education would transform works of structurally ineffective charity into practices of social reconstructionism.

The conscientized church would no longer be content, for example, simply to house the homeless. Rather, the church would analyze the structural components and the relations of cause and effect in the homeless situation. Within its Christian witness, the church would seek to change the social conditions that create and sustain the condition called homelessness. In a two-fold critical movement, the church would critically analyze the relational dynamics in the social setting and address in concrete ways the sinful complicity of all who contribute to homelessness.

On closer inspection we note that although conscientization depends upon critical reflection, *self-reflexive* critique is not present in Freire's work. Critical reflection in his liberationist pedagogy is directed outward, *from* the culture circle *to* the dehumanizing strategies of domination *upon* them. Freire does not account for the critical self-reflection of the proletariat upon the internal relations of power in their communities. His work suffers from an inability to critique the *relational infrastructure* of the those who

struggle against bourgeois elites. Furthermore, there is no transcendent ground in his theory upon which critical reflection can become fully self-reflexive. The paragraphs that follow document and discuss this absence of an *intraproletarian critique* in Freire: a critical self-reflection that would continuously reconstruct the relations among the impoverished.⁴

We submit four theses in critical evaluation of Freire's understanding of relationality which point to a theological reorientation.

FREIRE'S MATERIALIST ABSTRACTIONISM

The prevailing view among educators is that Freire's pedagogy rests on a firm foundation of concrete analysis and practice, that his educational program is a praxis-oriented one. To an extent this view is correct. But Freire's analysis is abstract in two fundamental ways: *its distance from a particular religious context and its bifurcation of social classes.*

Religious Contextualization. What is startling about Freire's project, noting its materialist foundations and his deeply religious sentiments, is the distance between his pedagogy and his Roman Catholic heritage. In his effort to free education from religious and theological impediments, he has secularized the process of conscientization. As a result, he has uprooted liberative educational practices from the abundant resources of his religious tradition.

This type of decontextualization—this distance from a religious context—has led to several problems, a few of which are pertinent here. Within the context of the stated thesis, the lack of a religious context contributes to a lack of understanding about his conception of faith, subjectivity, and volition. For example, his model of conscientization lacks historical concreteness and specificity on

⁴ *Intraproletarian* refers to the internal relational structure that demarcates the impoverished and working classes from the elites in power. *Proletariat* is a metaphor designating those who suffer from the strategies of domination. It is appropriate in this context, considering Freire's reliance upon Marx's historical materialism.

how the requirement of faith is generated. For Freire, the notion of faith is basic to conscientization. In *Education for Critical Consciousness*, he states that "faith in humanity" is a condition for dialogue. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, faith is an "*a priori* requirement." However, he does not answer the question: If faith is an *a priori* requirement for conscientization, and the process of conscientization begins at the point when people have little subjectivity, how can those suffering dehumanization and degradation develop enough faith to enter and sustain the conscientization process?

If his framework of education were more contextualized in a tradition, perhaps the ideological abstraction could have been averted somewhat. To salvage the pedagogy of conscientization from its enclosed ideological self-preoccupation, it should be placed within a larger tradition whose ultimate referent is transcendent.

Within the context of a local church and the richly diversified tradition of Christianity, conscientization gains historical concreteness and a transcendent reference. By participating in the heritage of Christian witness, those resisting oppression can locate their revolutionary efforts within the history of Christian struggle against sin and the political oppression documented in the biblical texts and in church history. They may be assured that they are in solidarity with a long lineage of folks who struggled and suffered. Contextualization in such a tradition as Christianity would generate and sustain a vigorous hope of victory through the narratives of communal resistance and liberation.

Furthermore, if the tradition is Christianity, *the ultimate referent of the tradition transcends the tradition*: the ultimate referent for the church is the revelation of God in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The motivating and energizing power to "fight the good fight" is a gift of the indwelling Spirit. This historical and yet transcendent contextuality attributes to conscientization not only a sense of solidarity with our religious ancestors, not only a sense of hope in a promised future, but also experiences of personal and social transcendence as we encounter the living God. One enters

the social setting in active solidarity and in critical reflection with the understanding that solidarity and critical reflection are unified in what Mark Kline Taylor calls "Christopraxis": the praxis of following Christ (Taylor 1990).

Intraproletarian Critique. A second feature of Freire's abstraction of social relations is a reductionistic dichotomy between the oppressed and oppressors. To a large extent this dichotomy mirrors Marx's functional bifurcation of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and does not pay close enough attention to the complexities of social reality and its relations of oppression. Economic class struggle is not the only nor the most important category of conflict.⁵ For example, feminists contend that economic domination parallels and interacts with the dynamics of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and abusive familial relations.⁶

A theoretical framework that is structurally dichotomous cannot represent reality adequately. Since oppression takes a multitude of forms from the institutional to the personal, the lines between the oppressed and oppressors become too blurry for this kind of representation. All of us perpetuate systemic oppression in some way, whether this be in government, business, or family.

Furthermore, Freire's ideological commitment cannot account for the inevitably dehumanizing nature of bureaucracy. As the social analysis of Max Weber has shown, bureaucratic institutions take on a life of their own as they evolve. Even those who are supposedly "in power" are often at the mercy of the bureaucratic machinery. Institutional rationalization increasingly rends power from individuals and locates it in the self-perpetuating forces of the bureaucratic structure.⁷ Therefore, a critique of oppressive forms and strategies of power and revolutionary opposition to this type of power must address not only the *people* who are "elite," but

⁵ Reducing human interaction to labor relations is a serious mistake of Marx. See Habermas' critique of Marx's reduction of human interaction to productive relations (Habermas 1971:326-329).

⁶ Abuse in families may also be a form of systemic violence, along with rape and sexual harassment. It has historical recurrence through generations and is linked with patriarchal power relations (cf. Jaggar 1983).

⁷ The rationalization of bureaucracy is an important and complex process in Weber's overall project (cf. Weber 1946, esp. pp. 228-245).

also the economic and political *bureaucracy* in which the elites themselves are dehumanized.

Freire's Marxist revolutionism allows no internal critique of the relationality in the proletariat as they struggle against forces of external domination. In his preoccupation with the combative strategies of the oppressed in the fight for liberation, Freire leaves little room for analysis or critique of intraproletarian relations. Freire gives short shrift to the necessary developmental evolution of human relationality that must accompany progressive enlightenment and intensified social action. And when revolutionary activity occurs within an ecclesiological context, progressive changes must occur in the communal relationality toward a Christian understanding of relationality. It must move toward an egalitarian, mutual reciprocity grounded in the Spirit of God.⁸

CONTRIBUTION OF BUBER'S DIALOGICAL PERSONALISM

Freire's notion of relationality is grounded in the dialogical personalism of Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel. I will focus here on Buber's contribution to Freire's understanding of relationality. Freire calls his pedagogy a "dialogical revolutionism." My second thesis concerns the deficiencies of personalism in Freire's conscientization: *In as much as Freire's understanding of relationality depends upon the dialogical personalism of Buber, it suffers from the faults that plague Buber's personalism.*

In Martin Buber's seminal text, *I and Thou*, philosophical and theological understandings of human relationality were greatly advanced. Basic to this text and to his later works was the contention that humans are constituted in relationships. Human relations can take variations of two forms: an "*I-Thou*" relation and an "*I-It*" relation. Dialogue is the metaphor for the medium through which the encounter of the *I* and the *Thou* occurs. In a genuine *I-Thou* relation, we are able to listen to the other's speech as something new and potentially revelatory without reducing the other to

⁸ Although outside a specifically Christian understanding of community, Robert Kegan's important book, *The Evolving Self*, discusses the progressive movement of individuals through structures of relationality.

our own prejudgments. In an *I-Thou* relationship, each person⁹ has a greater sense of the subjectivity of self and other. In the *I-It* relation, the *It* is objectified by the *I* such that the *I* is not at risk or changed. The *It* exists for the *I* and is not a subject in its own right.

Deficiencies of Buber's Personalism. Although Buber has contributed to our understanding of human relationality as the genesis of subjectivity, his notion of relationality is inadequate in four ways. First, Buber's analysis predated the insights of self-psychology and object-relations psychology.¹⁰ Missing in Buber is the *intersubjective nature of subjectivity*. Intersubjectivity means that egos are no longer self-contained entities who remain completely separate in an encounter with another ego. Rather, in an *I-Thou* encounter, aspects of the *Thou* enter *into* the psyche of the *I*, forming a constellation of images and experiences of significant others through the process of introjection or interiorization. In Buber, the subject-to-subject encounter of the *I-Thou* relation does not acknowledge that the subjectivity of each person in an *I-Thou* relation incorporates aspects of the other's personality.

In his *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, Wolfhart Pannenberg points to the second and third problematic aspects of Buber's personalism. Buber wishes to retain the mysteriousness of the relation of the *I-Thou* but cannot go far in describing the relation itself in a positive way. He usually opposes it to the *I-It* relation, posing the *I-Thou* relation in negative terms. More fundamentally however, the "shared objective world" of nature and of institutions and their practices is unaddressed in the dialogical personalism of Buber. The dualistic and privatistic nature of Buber's characterization of relationality excludes the social context of relationality.¹¹

Buber's understanding of relationality also suffers a theological deficiency, but not in the same way as Freire. For Buber, God is the

⁹ Although Buber's notion of *I-Thou* included relations with nonhuman reality, we are, like he, focusing on human relationality. But issues such as ecological justice are relevant to a discussion of an adequate understanding of and actualization of an enlivening relationality.

¹⁰ E.g., see Kohut and Rizzuto.

¹¹ Pannenberg follows the analysis of Buber's personalism proffered by M. Theunissen in *Der Andere: Studien Zur Sozialontologie der Gegenwart*. See Pannenberg 1985:180–184.

model of the *Thou* who is completely other and cannot be integrated instrumentally into the life-world of the subject. God is wholly transcendent and lays claim on our lives. As such, *I-Thou* relations based on Buber's conception of God are monological rather than dialogical. The movement is from God to humans.

Freire differs theologically from Buber in that he shares the Christian understanding of the incarnation. He does not understand God to be only transcendent and beyond our comprehension. On the contrary, God is present and working actively and redemptively in creation. The problem with Freire's theology is not so much his doctrine of God the Father as is his doctrine—or lack of doctrine—of God the Spirit. I will address this theological problem further below.

In summary, Freire suffers the same kinds of mistakes that characterize Buber's dialogical personalism. He lacks a full description of the intersubjective nature of individual subjectivity. He is reluctant to describe the positive content of communal relations. And he abstracts class struggles from larger social and cultural matrices of human interaction. If, in his analysis of the plight of the poor, Freire had retained the complexities of the wider web of relations in which class struggles occur, he could not have represented the reality of oppression in such a dualistic manner. As I will discuss in the next section, Freire's understanding of human relationality does not incorporate even the dialogical reciprocity that is at the heart of Buber's personalism.

THE LOSS OF DIALOGUE AND SELF-REFLECTION IN FREIRE

Although Freire ostensibly adopts a Buberian perspective on human relationality and says his pedagogy is a "dialogical revolutionism," Freire's description of conscientization is not as dialogical and reciprocal as Buber's conception of relationality. Hence my third thesis: *Freire's abstraction of the relations between the elites and the impoverished and among members of the proletariat themselves is not corrected by the dialogical personalism of Buber.*

Restricted Dialogue. Because of Freire's ideological commitments, the basic transformative medium—dialogue—becomes a mere

shadow of Buber's intention. For Buber, real dialogue occurs between two autonomous and free subjects: an *I* and a *Thou*. Both persons encounter one another in all their concretion and particularity. The encounter is mysterious and existentially powerful because of the irreducible otherness of the other. The *I* is at risk in the encounter and the relation itself takes precedence. Yet the ego is not only in relation with others, it is related to and with itself. In *I-Thou* relations, the *I* becomes conscious of itself and begins an *inner dialogue*:

Through the *Thou* a man becomes *I*. That which confronts him comes and disappears, relational events condense, then are scattered, and in the change consciousness of the unchanging partner, of the *I*, grows clear, and each time stronger. To be sure, it is still seen caught in the web of the relation with the *Thou*, as the increasingly distinguishable feature of that which reaches out to and yet is not the *Thou*. But it continually breaks through with more power, till a time comes and it bursts its bonds, and the *I* confronts itself for a moment, separated as though it were a *Thou*; as quickly to *take possession of itself and from then on to enter into relations in consciousness of itself*. (Buber 1958:28–29, emphasis added)

For Buber, *I-Thou* relations are not only an external dialogue between persons; they are the means through which *reflexive subjectivity*—that is, *self-consciousness*—is born.

Freire severely restricts the notion of dialogue. While Freire acknowledges that “dialogue cannot be *a posteriori* to [liberating] action, but must be concomitant with it,” he states on the same page, “Dialogue between the former oppressors and the oppressed as antagonistic classes was not possible before the revolution; *it continues to be impossible afterward*” (Freire 1970b:134, emphasis added). Freire strongly declares that dialogue can only take place between revolutionaries and the people and cannot and will not occur with elites. This position contrasts markedly

with that of Buber, who as a Jew in post-holocaust Israel, was severely criticized by other Jews for fostering dialogue between Jews and Germans by lecturing at German universities. To be sure, dialogue between opposing groups can occur only when both have a sufficient sense of subjectivity, which allows them a sustained voice. Until that point is reached, dialogue is impossible. The point here is that Freire regards all dialogue between elites and the oppressed to be counterproductive.

Restricted Self-Reflection. Buber would not have structured the relationship between oppressed and oppressors as has Freire, preventing the oppressed from putting themselves at risk in a dialogical encounter with their oppressors. In contrast, Freire sacrifices the reciprocity in Buber's personalism to Marx's ideological framework of class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. If no self-critical movement of reflection exists within the ranks of the proletariat, the internal relations among the poor cannot be reconstructed.

Limiting dialogue to those who are ideologically compatible signals an ideological embeddedness which has no place in the church. The church must keep to its universal evangelical mission as it participates in the Spirit's work of universal redemption.¹² This is in fact the tradition of the early church as a persecuted religious sect whose only defense was offensive evangelization. The Acts of the Apostles records startling encounters between the apostles and those Freire might label as elites. The conversion of Saul is an interesting example of an elite being transformed into a position of impassioned solidarity with those he was formerly persecuting. The church, though suspicious, welcomed him. Other examples of the church transcending ideological and social barriers in service of universal evangelization include Peter and

¹² However, indiscriminate tolerance at the expense of the oppressed is not acceptable. I do not advocate dialogue in an atmosphere of coercion and violence. This is in part the critique of Mark Kline Taylor against revisionist theological methods of correlation (1990:24–26). It could be that for Freire, *elite* is simply a functional designation of a group or person in power at that time. If this is the case, then as elites become less powerful, they are no longer elites. However, this line of reasoning is not evident in his writings.

the Roman centurian, Cornelius (Acts 10) and Paul and Silas with the jailer (Acts 16). The ideological commitments of Freire to a quasi-romantic notion of the oppressed (which leaves their internal relational structures unexamined) must be strongly critiqued by a church committed to Christ.

THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN PRAXIS: THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Our fourth thesis addresses more directly the transposition of conscientization into an ecclesiological context. Freire's educational program cannot fulfill the central and peculiar requirement of the church: *All activities of the church and all Christian praxis must be centered in and oriented to the work of the Holy Spirit. The pedagogy of conscientization in the church finds its fulfillment as it corresponds to the overall 'missio dei' as revealed in Jesus Christ.*

Freire does not lay out his theological orientation systematically in any one place in his writings, so it is difficult to gain an overall view of it. Daniel Schipani and John Elias both call Freire a "Christian humanist." I agree that a Christian sentiment is pervasive in his writings and even rendered explicit at times. However, humanism guides the religious and theological dimension of his thought. His primary social and political agenda is the liberation of the masses. Thus, he uses the religious theological language and tradition in so far as it contributes to liberation.

Men free themselves only in concert, in communion, collaborating on something wrong which they want to correct. There is an interesting theological parallel to this: no one saves another, no one saves himself all alon[e], because *only in communion can we save ourselves or not save ourselves.* (Freire 1972:8, emphasis added)

Again, liberation is the mold in which the divine-human relationship is cast: "Man is an incomplete being, and the completion of his incompleteness is encountered in his relationship with his Creator, a relationship which, by its very nature, can never be a relationship of domination or domestication, but is always a

relationship of liberation. . . . Precisely because he is a finite and indigent being, in this transcendence through love, man has his return to his source, who liberates him" (Freire in Elias 1976:41). His concept of liberation lies within a narrow conception of who needs liberating and from what.

Freire's entire educational project is undergirded by a problem-solving pragmatism centered in an anthropologically conceived liberation. For Freire, the authority of the liberative educational program resides in the notion of liberation itself mediated through a utopian vision of a "militant democracy" (Freire 1973:41, 58). The guiding metaphors for his utopian, post-revolutionary activity are "fraternity" and "communion." Although these terms work together to correlate civic and religious notions of mutual esteem and cooperation, the weight of Freire's presentation is upon the civic implications of the utopian vision. Fraternity connotes a setting in which egalitarian relations pervade the social sphere and generate a sense of civic friendship and social solidarity. Communion refers to the cooperative activity and the unity of mind among those struggling in resistance to domination. Thus, Freire's notion of utopian democracy is united by the pragmatic common purpose of those of like mind. This vision is a closed utopia that excludes otherness.

Liberation as the guiding concept for conscientization is itself a pragmatic concept whose content is primarily negative: the absence of restriction and domination. Liberation so constructed offers no movement of transcendence, no transcendent reference as a *necessary* and *guiding* factor except for the weak projection of a utopian, civic communion among victorious revolutionaries. *So the program of liberation as Freire proposes it is a closed system, unable to critique itself by reference to a sufficiently transcendent referent.*

Throughout this essay I have stressed that Freire has abstracted class struggle from the whole of human interaction. He has interpreted the rest of history through this one lens. Against precisely this kind of ideological interpretive process, Jürgen Moltmann has warned, "In actual fact this 'quite concrete' way of thinking is highly abstract, for it detaches one aspect from all the

wealth of life's interrelations and particularizes it." Rather than abstracting and universalizing a particular experience, Moltmann suggests that Christians try to "grasp the single event, the special experience and the particular practice in the context and in the movements of the history of God":

Without an understanding of the particular church in the framework of the universal history of God's dealings with the world, ecclesiology remains abstract and the church's self-understanding blind. This will lead almost unavoidably to the danger that the church will lend a universal claim to quite limited tasks, and will support interests conditioned by a particular period with the solemnity of the absolute. (Moltmann 1991:51)

To incorporate Freire's pedagogy within the church's Spirit-directed praxis requires a shift from a pragmatic to a theological orientation. The primary referent for the church is not an anthropocentric conception of liberation; the church and the entire Christian tradition should always orient itself to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The Christocentric orientation of the church is fundamentally trinitarian. Christ's life, death, and resurrection reveal his unity with the Father and the Spirit. Because Christ is the self-revelation of God's activity in the world, theological reflection on ecclesiology and the church's action in the world begins in the history and future of Christ as the revelation of the trinitarian history of God's actions in the world. The revelation of the trinitarian God in Christ is the source and authority for all ecclesial relations.

Moltmann has done an extensive analysis of ecclesiology in light of the history of the Trinity in his *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. For him, an analysis of the church must begin with its origin as the historical and particular embodiment of Christ and his mission. The *missio dei* is "a movement from God in which the church has its origin and arrives at its own movement, but which goes beyond the church, finding its goal in the consummation of all creation in God." Hence, the mission of Christ creates the

church. The messianic commission “embraces all activities that serve to liberate man from his slavery in the presence of the coming God, slavery which extends from economic necessity to Godforsakenness” (Moltmann 1991:10).

Only by proclaiming Christ, by being the living sacrament of Christ in the world, is the church fulfilling its true vocation as the body of Christ. Moltmann refers to a rightly ordered Christian praxis as a “messianic *façon de vivre*” (Moltmann 1991:275f). The messianic style of life is not a creation of the church. It is a gift of the Spirit in its universal activity of glorifying God. Messianic praxis is ordered by a confidence in God and is characterized by an openness to existence within an eschatological orientation.

The mission of God does not follow the interests of the church nor of humanity, strictly speaking. The objective is not humanist, nor is the focus anthropocentric. Those perspectives converge and are transformed in the historical mission of the church to glorify the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Since the church’s defining mission is to glorify the Father, its life and activity are understood within the work of the Spirit. The church exists as the sacramental embodiment of Christ in the world in the power of the Spirit. Thus, the Spirit is the enlivening, empowering reality of the church’s messianic orientation.

To interpret the church in this fashion leads to a trinitarian interpretation of the church. The relationality of the Trinity, both *ad intra* and *ad extra*, eternal and historical, must be the reference point for ecclesial activities and relational structures. If the church is to remain true to its trinitarian foundation, there must be a direct correspondence between the internal relations of the church and the relations internal to the Trinity. For the church to order its theology and practice according to the trinitarian relations among the divine Persons, all institutional structures, all corporate practices, and all beliefs must be open to the transforming work of the Spirit, who brings the church, the Body of Christ, into closer conformity with Christ. Furthermore, there must be a correspondence between the relations within the church and those extending beyond it. When the church manifests the Spirit’s

reconciling activity and conforms by the power of the Spirit to Christ's messianic purpose—only then does it become a holy sacrament of God's presence in the world.

As a part of its sacramental presence in the world, the church must continually submit its relational forms and dynamics to critical analysis and reconstruction before the trinitarian self-communication revealed in Christ. The church must not be content with self-reflection. It must address the dehumanizing and oppressive institutional and social relations as well. The revolutionary activity of the church, as a function of its *missio dei*, must correspond to personal and social repentance and transformation. Conversions of heart and changes in behavior have too often been relegated to the personal sphere. But fidelity to the thrust of the biblical writings and to the revelation in Jesus Christ requires that we understand repentance and transformation not as private matters but as socially relevant, applicable to every facet of ecclesial and civic life.

More work needs to be done to show how a trinitarian relationality might be concretely practiced in the various institutional settings of the church and how the process of conscientization fits within a particular local setting. Because of the particularities of each local context—race, class, gender, social context, and theological orientation—each person and congregation must reflect upon the practical implications of a conscientizing religious education within a trinitarian perspective. Indeed, it would be unconscionable for me as a white, middle-class male to dictate to others the practical means by which to carry out such an educational program in their church. This essay has sought a more humble objective: to focus on the dynamics of self-reflection and the theological transcendent reference necessary for self-reflexive critical reflection and relational restructuring in the church.

In the Christian tradition, emancipative solidarity with those who suffer and critical reflection need not be contradictory or mutually antagonistic. If we understand the Christian tradition as an attempt at a dialogical communality to be completed and perfected only in the eschaton, then critical reflection becomes

essential to cultivating solidarity. Reasoned argumentation among differing perspectives keeps the tradition from petrifying into theological reification.¹³ A critical mind set is a natural by-product of a Christian praxis of faith focused upon God, as immanently revealed in history and as transcendentally beyond our complete comprehension. This type of faith-based, yet critical, hermeneutical posture relativizes all human efforts and forms in the light of the Trinity as revealed in Christ. It prevents a reification of all personal and social approximations of faithful service to Christ.

As important as critical reflection is to Christian faith, it is not the bedrock upon which Christian life is founded. Christianity is grounded upon the revelation of God in Christ, which we receive and appropriate by faith. Countless volumes have been written in an attempt to explicate the previous sentence, but for our purposes, the implications of a faith-based Christian life are several. First, worship is central in the praxis of the church as it invokes the presence of the Spirit and evokes a congregational response to the Word of God. The church worships corporately in the joy of the Lord, celebrating the continual presence of the Spirit that enlivens and sustains faith. In messianic practices and in the communion of worship, the community of the faithful unites in obedience to Christ and in the joy of life that the Spirit engenders.

Yet we cannot stop there, for Christian life in the Spirit yields a profound sense of solidarity with all who suffer the degrading effects of sin and oppression. As Christ suffered with and for humanity and all creation while walking on earth, and as God suffers even now with us, we too suffer the pains of humanity in our faithful devotion to Christ. The unifying element between the personal sufferings of individuals, the common social anguish of societies, and the groaning of creation is the incarnate sufferings of Christ (cf. Moltmann 1974). To the extent that we as Christians participate in the life and death of Christ, we share in the common

¹³ Cf. Alysdaire MacIntyre's description of tradition as a continuing argument between competing factions in *After Virtue*. This type of competitive model of argumentation is not appropriate for the church.

plight of creation. Being so involved in the sufferings of others, Christians must levy a critique against all forms of mercilessness and injustice despite their sources.

Second, conscientization as a process of awakening consciousness and transformative action is not abstracted from its dependence upon elements of tradition, such as scripture, historical forms of Christian life, and continuous participation in the mission of the church. Liberative education grounded in the historically concrete elements of the Christian tradition has two implications for religious education. On the one hand, not only do the sources of tradition support transformative action, they reorient us to follow the cross of Christ. These sources are not used as a means to an end we devise. On the contrary, they serve to question us and to call us to more faithful service to God and the divine purpose. On the other hand, the pedagogy of conscientization calls us to reconceive the “instructional paradigm” of transmissive Christian education so prevalent in today’s churches, such as the typical forms of classroom-based Sunday school.

All educational content and methods should be evaluated for their potential to increase the congregation’s participation in the planning, administration, and implementation of the church’s *missio dei*. Rather than being a segregated enterprise from the rest of the activities of the church, Christian education should engender greater and more constructive participation of the members in the church’s messianic vocation. The result of this reorientation of Christian education will be a closer linkage between the commission of Christ, the Christian witness, Christian praxis, and the congregation’s participation at every level.

Third, transformative action within the context of corporate worship and as the product of conscientization includes the personal, social, and ecclesial dimensions of our social existence. We must submit all areas of our lives, individually and corporately, to critical analysis and reconstruction in light of the history and relationality of the holy Trinity. All relational forms and dynamics must be critiqued according to the divine relations among the Trinity, such as (a) Christian praxis, (b) ecclesial bureaucracy,

(c) relations among the congregation, and (d) relations beyond the congregation.

Educational ministries that address the issue of homelessness from a Christian form of conscientization would take on a new dynamic. Not only would the church provide shelter, investigate alternative housing, help the unemployed find work with adequate pay, and try to conscientize the homeless according to the pedagogy of conscientization, educational ministry to the homeless according to a perspective of Christian conscientization includes at least the following: (a) dismantling the middle-class ethos of the church; (b) giving those who are poor a voice in the church and raising the consciousness of the church members regarding their complicity in the alienation of the disenfranchised; and (c) changing the relational structures and dynamics of the church to be more fully a church of the poor.

The local church should welcome the process of conscientization among the disenfranchised as one means by which problematic areas in its own relational structures may come to light. This is one way the church can reach out concretely to those on its periphery and integrate those marginalized by its own oppressive practices. By allowing the voices of the disenfranchised to be agents of change in the internal structures of the church, the *ecclesia* moves toward the fellowship of an inclusive *koinonia*.

As Christian fellowships in North America wake up to the social dynamics of oppression and commit themselves to a liberating praxis in the service of the redemptive, reconciling activity of God, the pedagogy of conscientization can be a tool in the Christian praxis of emancipative Christian solidarity. If Freire's program of conscientization is carried out without critical reconstruction, the evangelical mission of the church will be reduced to ideological revolutionism that does not go beyond the unreflective activism Freire himself opposes.

The educational effort to conscientize people in the church must be carried out within the holistic guiding framework of the redemptive activity of Christ as mediated through the Christian scriptures and tradition. If local congregations come to "own"

and implement this type of radical educational program, it will drastically alter the relational and bureaucratic infrastructures of local churches and will impel them to radical social action. This action must always be a response to—and empowered by—the Spirit for the glory of God.

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The Buddhist Notion of Emptiness and the Christian God

Buddhism and Process Theology
from an Asian Perspective

KEN CHRISTOPH MIYAMOTO

INTRODUCTION

Asia is a pluralistic world. A variety of peoples, languages, cultures, and religions has long coexisted in this part of the earth. This is the case not only with Asia as a whole, but also with many of the individual Asian countries.

One of the major tasks of Christians in Asia is to cope with the reality of this plurality. They have to struggle with it and respond to it at the theoretical as well as the practical level. They need to understand their brothers and sisters of other faiths—and of no faith—and fight in solidarity with them against various dehumanizing forces. They also must shed light on the theological meaning of traditional cultures and religions and their renewal movements. Christian commitment to these efforts must not derive simply because Christians in Asia live in the midst of non-Christian cultures and religions, but primarily because these heritages are an inseparable part of their life as well as the life of their sisters and brothers of other faiths and of no faith.

Japan is no exception to this. While ethnically almost homogeneous, Japanese culture has its religious roots in Shintoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. Even in today's highly industrialized Japanese society, the significance of these religions is not at all

negligible. Christians in Japan must struggle with and respond to them at both the theoretical and the practical levels.

This article is an attempt to cope with the reality of such plurality with special attention to Buddhism. The purpose in this paper is twofold. First, it seeks an image of the Christian God more appropriate to Japanese culture rooted in Buddhist tradition, both with the help of the Buddhist notion of Emptiness and through a critical assessment of process theologian John Cobb's response to the notion. Second, it evaluates the significance of process theology, particularly Cobb's version of it, for the task of contextualizing the Christian faith in Asia.

BUDDHISM AND JAPANESE CULTURE

In the history of Japan, Buddhism has contributed a lot to the formation and development of the national culture. This religion, especially Mahayana Buddhism, first came to this country in the sixth century through Korea from China. Since then it has been deeply interwoven with Shintoism and has experienced periods of prosperity and decline throughout the history of Japan. It is still influential among the Japanese people.

It is not easy to find devout Buddhists in modern Japanese society. In general, the Japanese are indifferent to religion. Nevertheless, the role of Buddhism in their daily life is still significant. Most Japanese families have their own family Buddhist altars (*butsudan*) in their living rooms. They are normally affiliated with certain Buddhist temples (*danna-dera*). The funerals of the Japanese are usually held with Buddhist rituals. The families of the deceased regularly keep memorial services for them, visiting their graves, which are usually located in their *danna-dera*. The visit to a Buddhist temple or a Shinto shrine on New Year's Day is one of the commonly held customs of the Japanese. Furthermore, books on Buddhism appear on the shelves of most bookstores. Many nonreligious people practice Zen regularly to cultivate their spiritual lives with no special interest in the Buddhist teachings themselves.

One can also find examples of the Buddhist influence on Japanese culture in the Japanese language. One of them is a phrase *onore o munashiku suru*, which means, “to make oneself empty” and is used in the sense of “to dedicate oneself to” something or someone, namely, to one’s business, study, family, or society. This phrase has widely been used in regard to the men and women of the post-war generation who contributed greatly to the reconstruction of the land devastated by the Pacific War. The Japanese frequently describe their self-sacrificing assiduity as follows: “Making themselves empty (*onore o munashiku shite*), they have worked so hard for the sake of the Japanese society and the following generations.” Another expression is the word *munashisa*, which means “emptiness.” This word expresses the feeling of meaninglessness, mutability, or vanity which many of the Japanese people experience in their lives.

Of course, the emptiness implied by these expressions is different from that in the strict Buddhist sense. In spite of this difference, some continuity or similarity between them remains. The similarity of “making oneself empty” with the Buddhist notion of Emptiness is clear. The Bodhisattvas (those on the path to perfect Buddhahood) are the ideal, salvific figures in Mahayana Buddhism. Their path to the perfection of Wisdom (that is, the realization of Emptiness) is considered to be identical with the compassionate work to rescue all sentient beings from the stream of Samsara. This identification is probably reflected in the phrase.¹

On the other hand, the daily experience of *munashisa* and the Buddhist experience of Emptiness reveal two different, even opposite, sides of the same human reality. For us human beings (at least for those who have been nurtured in Japanese culture), the vicissitudes of human life often feel really empty—meaningless, mutable, transient, and vain. When we say that our life is empty, this has a negative connotation. In our daily life, we engage

¹ Buddhist “Emptiness” is here distinguished by capitalization from “emptiness” as a feeling experienced by ordinary people. It is, however, difficult to draw a clear line between them, due to their continuity which is discussed in this paper.

ourselves in this transient and ephemeral world as if it were meaningful, eternal, and immutable. We thus experience much suffering and pain. This reality probably lies behind the view of human existence which the ancient Indians expressed in the idea of Samsara, the world of endless transmigration.

Buddhism, however, says a radical “yes” to such experiences of empty reality. While ordinary people try to escape from emptiness to what appears to be more certain and meaningful, Buddhism affirms emptiness as the ultimate feature of reality and comprehends everything from the perspective of this basic affirmation. For Buddhists, reality is nothing but Emptiness. The realization of this fact and its meaning through contemplation is the path to salvation. And for those who have attained this realization (*satori*), it is unnecessary and foolish to cling to this world. Thus, our daily feeling of emptiness and the Buddhist *satori* have their deep roots in the same reality and experience of human life. They are, therefore, continuous.

This continuity is probably a reason that people in Japan often become interested in religion through their experiences of emptiness. They are quite naturally attracted by Buddhism on such occasions, for it directly deals with the issue of emptiness. Even when they come to Christianity, many of them are attracted first by Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament, in which the Japanese translation for “vanity” is the word *kū*, the word Buddhists use to mean Emptiness. Many Japanese feel that Ecclesiastes is the most religious book among the scriptural writings.

An understanding of the cultural significance of Buddhism in Japan is crucial for my purpose in this paper; namely, to respond to John Cobb’s approach to Buddhism. In Japanese society, no Christian can avoid the influence of this traditional religion. For example, the Protestant theologian Kazoh Kitamori’s *Theology of the Pain of God* (1965) and the Catholic novelist Shusaku Endo’s *A Life of Jesus* (1973) show this influence over the authors’ theological thoughts and interpretations of the Bible. (It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss this issue in detail.) The presenta-

tion of the love of Jesus by Endo especially reminds one of the compassion of the Bodhisattvas.²

The Bodhisattvas' compassion is far more familiar to the Japanese people than the traditional image of Christian love revealed in Jesus Christ. While the former has long fostered the Japanese imagery of love, the latter is still novel and alien to the Japanese mind and heart. For most Asians, the expression "the love of God" is merely a vacuous linguistic sign whose content must be filled in with images peculiar and relevant to the experiences of Asian people. Both Kitamori's and Endo's works show that this process of mutual interaction between the Christian concept and Buddhism has already been in progress in the minds of Asian Christians. So the "Buddhization" of Christianity has already started, regardless of whether one favors it or not.

In recent years, a proposal on the "Buddhization" of Christianity has emerged even among Western Christians. It is the proposal of the leading process theologian, John B. Cobb, Jr. This proposal is based on his own Christian-Buddhist dialogue which was prompted by his awareness of the "special congeniality" between Buddhism and Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy—especially in their shared denial of substance (Cobb and Griffin 1976:137). He is also willing to learn from this Eastern religion:

The encounter with Buddhism forces the process theologian to see more clearly the extent to which Whitehead's philosophical analysis itself is informed by Christian interests. Clearly, when the analysis of experience is informed by Buddhist interests instead, it yields different results. . . . For this reason the encounter with Buddhism can lead to a creative transformation of process theology that does not deny its insights but

²What is especially interesting is that one of the most popular Bodhisattvas (Kannon or Avalokitesvara) is often given a female image and Endo regards his image of Jesus' love as maternal. The feminine feature common to both probably has some cultural significance worthy of note.

incorporates them in a larger whole. (Cobb and Griffin 1976:139–40)

Cobb's approach to interreligious dialogue and the affinities between Buddhism and process thought are worthy of further research, but this is beyond the scope of this paper. In the rest of the paper, we will reflect on the question, What is the significance of Cobb's work for us Asian Christians? As we address this question, we will focus on the Buddhist notion of Emptiness and Cobb's response to it.³

THE BUDDHIST NOTION OF EMPTINESS

In his *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*, Edward Conze says: "The Abhidharmists knew the term *empty*, but used it very sparingly. In the Pali Canon it occurs only on a few occasions" (1975:132). The *Abhidharma* is the literature composed by Buddhist scholars of various Hinayana schools from ca. 350 B.C. to analyze, order, and elucidate the basic Buddhist ideas in a systematic and authoritative manner (Robinson and Johnson 1982:40).⁴ The notion of *sunyata*—Emptiness—was not common among the Hinayana Buddhists. With the rise of the Mahayana (between 100 B.C. and A.D. 100), this notion became central to the teachings of Buddhism.

³ One limitation in this task is the difficulty in delineating precisely the Buddhist notion of Emptiness. My family, whose religion is Pure Land Buddhism, is nominal Buddhist. I was fostered with no religious devotion prior to my personal, conscious conversion to Christianity at the age of twenty-four. As we have seen above, Japanese culture is deeply rooted in the Mahayana tradition, but to know fully what Buddhists mean by Emptiness, Nirvana, dependent origination, and so on, some intentional and continual practice and devotion are indispensable. Furthermore, the profundity of Buddhist thought often prevents one from penetrating these notions deeply. Due to this limitation, what I will discuss below is of a tentative nature.

⁴ Hinayana Buddhism is often called "Theravada" Buddhism in consideration of the historical fact that the term *Hinayana* (i.e., the Lesser Vehicle) originated as a pejorative used by the *Mahayana* (i.e., the Greater Vehicle) Buddhists to refer to those who did not accept their sutras and teachings. In this paper, however, I prefer the term *Hinayana*, since the Theravada which later became dominant in Southeast Asia was originally one of the major "Hinayana" schools.

Since the time of Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha), Buddhists have consistently denied any substantial reality to the world of Samsara, based on the Buddha's teaching of *pratitya-samutpada* ("dependent origination"). This fundamental teaching of Buddhism is shown by the following passage from the Pali Canon:

Conditioned by ignorance are the karma-formations; conditioned by the karma-formation is consciousness; conditioned by consciousness is mind-and-body; conditioned by mind-and-body are the six sense-fields; conditioned by the six sense-fields is impression; conditioned by impression is feeling; conditioned by feeling is craving; conditioned by craving is grasping; conditioned by grasping is becoming; conditioned by becoming is birth; conditioned by birth there come into being aging and dying, grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair. Thus is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

But from the stopping of ignorance is the stopping of the karma-formations; from the stopping of the karma-formations is the stopping of consciousness; from the stopping of consciousness is the stopping of mind-and-body; from the stopping of mind-and-body is the stopping of the six sense-fields; from the stopping of the six sense-fields is the stopping of impression; from the stopping of impression is the stopping of feeling; from the stopping of feeling is the stopping of craving; from the stopping of craving is the stopping of grasping; from the stopping of grasping is the stopping of becoming; from the stopping of becoming is the stopping of birth; from the stopping of birth, aging and dying, grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair are stopped. Thus is the stopping of this whole mass of suffering. (Conze, et al. 1990:66–67)

As we see from this passage, dependent origination is the teaching of a causal relationship that sees ignorance as the root cause of all suffering and the cessation of ignorance as the path to deliverance

from it. Its core is the principle of interdependency, which says, “If this is that comes to be; from the arising of this that arises; if this is not that does not come to be; from the stopping of this that is stopped” (Conze, et al., 1990:66). To put it differently, *pratitya-samutpada* holds “that all things, mental and physical, arise and exist due to the presence of certain conditions, and cease once their conditions are removed” (Harvey 1990:54). This means that everything in the world of Samsara is dependent on causes outside itself, and that no self-existent and permanent substance exists. The ultimate goal of Buddhists—Nirvana—is “the unconditioned cessation of all unsatisfactory, conditioned phenomena” which “is only attained when there is total non-attachment and letting go” (Harvey 1990:61–62).

With the development of Buddhist philosophy, however, those who contrasted the reality of Nirvana with Samsara tried to attribute substantiality or *svabhava* (self-existence) to the former.⁵ This tendency was especially evident in the philosophy developed by the Hinayana school called Sarvastivadins (“All-is-ists,” “Pan-realists”) who taught “that not only present *dharma*s exist, but also past and future ones” (Harvey 1990:85). Cobb briefly summarizes this development:

All Buddhists had denied substantial reality to Samsara. This was the world of transmigration, of relativistic flux, of *pratitya-samutpada* or dependent origination. All things *are* only by their participation in other things. No thing has any existence in itself. But if Nirvana is juxtaposed to Samsara as its opposite, then to Nirvana as ultimate reality seems to be attributed an independent and self-contained existence. Even though Nirvana was not conceived as the substance of the world, it was in danger of being seen as self-existent, or *sva-bhava*. (1982:89)

⁵ According to Richard H. Robinson, *svabhava* is a term which refers to “something (1) existing through its own power rather than that of another, (2) possessing an invariant and inalienable mark, and (3) having an immutable essence” (1970:51–52).

It was against this development that the Mahayana schools struggled. Opposing the substantialization of Nirvana, they radically applied the notion of dependent origination even to this ultimate reality. The point of their claim was:

The perfection of wisdom consists in the direct realization that all the dharmas, whether conditioned or unconditioned, are śūnya (empty). Saṃsāra is empty, and nirvāṇa is empty; the Buddhas are empty, as are the beings whom they guide. Thus, there is no essential difference between the relative and the absolute. (Robinson and Johnson 1982:69)

As this passage shows, the Mahayana negation of *svabhava* or the self-existence of Nirvana led to the denial of dualism between the ultimate reality and the world of transmigration. According to the Mahayanists, there was no essential distinction between these two. Thus, “Nirvana is Samsara and Samsara is Nirvana; for both Nirvana and Samsara are ‘sunya’ or empty. All that is, is Emptiness” (Cobb 1977:14). This is exactly what is meant by a famous passage in one of the fundamental Mahayana sutras, the *Prajnaparamita-hrdaya Sutra* (the “Heart Sutra”):

Here, O Sariputra, form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ from form, nor does form differ from emptiness; whatever is form, that is emptiness, whatever is emptiness, that is form. (Conze, et al. 1990:152).

What then did the Mahayanists mean by *sunyata* or Emptiness? According to Hajime Nakamura, this notion was used by the Madhyamikas, one of the important Mahayana schools, as synonymous with *pratitya-samutpada* (1980:192–193). It implies that no self-existent or permanent substance exists in the world. “The world is a web of fluxing, inter-dependent, baseless phenomena” (Harvey 1990:99). In short, Emptiness is the absence of *svabhava*. Cobb’s following explanation of the notion gives us a further clarification on this point:

What does it mean to say that an event, such as a moment of human experience, is empty?

First, it is empty of substance. There is no underlying self or “I” that unites separate moments of experience. . . . The happening of the experience brings into being the only subject that in any sense exists, and this subject is nothing other than the happening.

Second, the experience lacks all possession. . . . The experience is nothing but the coming together of that which is other than the experience.

Third, the experience is empty of form. . . . The form is nothing but the result of the constitution, which is carried out by the constituting elements.

Fourth, it is empty of being. There is not, in addition to the coming together of the constituting elements[,] something else which is the being of the new experience. Those constituting elements become the new experience, or rather, this becoming is the experience. Further, these elements, in their turn do not have being; for they in their turn are empty in the same way. There is no being—only Emptiness. (1977:15)

Actually, the Hinayana Buddhists did have the concept of “no-self” (*anatman*), whose meaning was similar to Emptiness. The term *atman* or self was almost synonymous with *svabhava*. Thus, Richard H. Robinson maintains that the Mahayana concept of Emptiness “is not really an innovation” (1970:52). According to him, its significance lies rather in this: the Hinayanists with their “emphasis on suffering and impermanence . . . intended to arouse aversion to worldly life.” The Mahayanists, however, with their emphasis on Emptiness, summoned “the hearer to reevaluate transmigration and achieve release within it rather than fleeing it while still considering it real and important.” The purpose of the contemplation of Emptiness was “not to deny commonsense reality to things as experienced in the commonsense world.” It is rather “to cleanse one’s vision of false views, and so to see the world ‘as it really is,’ that is, to see its ‘suchness’ (*tathatā*)” (Robinson 1970:52).

According to Ryusei Takeda and Cobb, the Chinese translation of the term that means “suchness” is “truth” (*shinnyo* in Japanese). This shows that, for Buddhists, “to be true means for something to be as it is or such as it is” (Takeda and Cobb 1974:31). For them, the final goal—the realization of Emptiness—is to see the world as it really is.

This probably explains the continuity we saw above between our ordinary experience of emptiness and the Buddhist experience of Emptiness. Both of the experiences are based on and witness to the same reality of the world. The former witnesses it as Samsara, the world of suffering; the latter as suchness or Emptiness, the world of Nirvana, which is actually not different from Samsara. Both are an experience of dependent origination, the recognition that neither the self nor the world has an ultimate, eternal, or immutable ground within itself. Nothing is self-contained or independent of other beings. While ordinary people try to escape from this fact, the enlightened Buddhists hold it as the supreme truth.

Cobb calls Buddhist Emptiness the ultimate reality. Based on the above observation, however, I would rather agree with Robinson, who says that dependent origination, which is seen by the Mahayanists as equivalent to Emptiness, is “a descriptive law” (1970:52). In other words, Emptiness, which is actually a radicalized conception of dependent origination, is nothing but the factual description of our immediate reality, though this description has its roots in the long and intense practices of the enlightened saints in various ages. Therefore, I would avoid calling Emptiness the *ultimate* reality.

Once we affirm that Emptiness is our reality, there is no need to distinguish the ultimate reality from our ordinary reality. There is only one reality. Indeed, Samsara is Nirvana and Nirvana is Samsara. Instead of talking about the distinction between the ultimate and the ordinary realities, we would better talk about two different epistemological standpoints, as Robinson says:

Nirvāṇa is by definition changeless, while dependent coarising [= dependent origination] is the process of

change. Śūnyavādins [= Madhyamikas] say, though, that dependent coarising is noncinematic. When seen from the absolute standpoint, past, present, and future are all observed simultaneously, like a painting, while from the conventional standpoint they appear as a series, like a movie. The contrast between the two truths (conventional and absolute) is the basic principle of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, and all their apparent paradoxes merely insist that what is true from one standpoint is false from the other. This epistemological dualism is the price that Śūnyavāda ["Emptiness Teaching"] pays for ontological nondualism. (1970:53)

This difference between conventional and absolute standpoints is what distinguishes ordinary people from the enlightened Buddhists. What is central to Mahayana Buddhism is not a teaching on ultimate reality, but the truth of our immediate reality seen from this absolute standpoint.

THE EMPTINESS OF GOD

So far we have reviewed the Buddhist notion of Emptiness and have come to reject calling Emptiness the ultimate reality. We will now turn our attention to Cobb's response to the notion of Emptiness and to the implications this notion may have for the Christian understanding of God.

COBB'S VIEW OF GOD AND EMPTINESS

In our world, there are many religions. Several great world religions separate human beings, each of which claims its own "ultimate." Our world has seen many ultimates "in relation to which segments of humanity have taken their bearings" (Cobb 1977:12). Faced with this situation, Cobb's basic question is "whether human beings can develop their relations to this multiplicity of ultimates in ways that are not mutually exclusive." To answer this question, he takes up the Christian and Buddhist ultimates—namely God and Emptiness—as examples. For him,

“Emptiness and God name two quite different ultimates to which we are related in two quite different ways” (Cobb 1977:12).

In his attempt to integrate these two ultimates, Cobb first claims the necessity to recognize that there have been “two ultimates” in the history of religions, namely, “the metaphysical ultimate and the ultimate principle of rightness” (1977:22). He says further that the history of Western thought “reveals a fundamental instability in the efforts to identify the two ultimates as one” (1977:19). In the traditional Christian idea of God, there has been a tension caused by the efforts to intertwine the ethical concept of the biblical God with the philosophical concept of Being or Godhead, understood as an ultimate ground of being or a substance underlying the empirical phenomena.

Cobb goes on to dissociate God from the latter and identify God with the ultimate principle of rightness: the God of the Bible. Furthermore, supported by the Whiteheadian notion of creativity, which Cobb considers as Whitehead’s formulation of dependent origination (1977:22),⁶ he dissolves the metaphysical factor of the traditional concept of God (that is, Being or Godhead) into dependent origination or Emptiness. Thus, Cobb maintains the clear distinction between the two ultimates—God as the ethical

⁶In Whitehead’s philosophy, “creativity” is one of the three ultimate notions and explains the relationship between the other two ultimates, the “many” and the “one.” It is seen as “the principle of novelty” that is involved in “concrecence,” the process in which “the many become one, and are increased by one” (Whitehead 1978:21). The notion of dependent origination is equated by Cobb not only with “creativity” but also with “concrecence” (1982:146).

The Japanese Buddhist scholar, Masao Abe, however, expresses his objection to this view, saying, “Whitehead’s notion of ‘concrecence,’ which is often compared with the Buddhist notion of dependent origination, is formulized by him in such statements as ‘the many became [*sic*] one, and are increased by one.’ On the other hand, in the Buddhist teaching of dependent origination it must be said that ‘the many *are* one: one *is* the many.’ For in dependent origination, it is not only that one and the many are dependent on each other in their arising and ceasing, but also that both one and the many are completely without substance and *empty*” (1980:11–12).

Abe’s position appears more consistent with the notion of dependent origination. However, the difference between Cobb and Abe deserves careful examination in regard to their understandings of Buddhism and Whitehead’s philosophy.

ultimate and Emptiness or creativity as the metaphysical ultimate—and relates them to each other.

One objection to this way of thinking arises from the above observation that Buddhist Emptiness is not the ultimate reality. As stated earlier, it is rather the factual description of immediate reality seen from the absolute standpoint. Though a practical question remains concerning how we Christians can acquire this standpoint, the view of Emptiness as a factual description makes Cobb's claim on the double ultimate irrelevant for Buddhism and Christianity. God is the only ultimate. However, this view inevitably places God as well as the personal self and other things in the world into the realm of Emptiness or dependent origination. This means that God as the only ultimate is the empty God. Cobb is therefore correct when he says:

God, too, insofar as God is, must be empty. That would mean recognizing that God does not possess a being different in kind from the being of other entities, which has been displayed as Emptiness. God, too, must be empty, just as the self, and all things are empty—empty of substantiality or own-being, and lacking in any given character of their own. God like all things must be an instance of dependent co-origination. (1977:22)

THE EMPTY GOD

The claim that God is empty may become more intelligible with the help of some biblical concepts familiar to Christians. We will try to re-image the empty God here, using one of such familiar concepts, the love of God. However, Christians have had various images of divine love with different emphases. We will base our discussion on an Asian image of it, namely, Shusaku Endo's picture of Jesus in his *A Life of Jesus*.

They recalled the face and the form of Jesus when he was still alive: the tired sunken eyes, a sad radiance from the deep-set eyes, the pure and gentle gleam in the eyes when they were smiling. He was the man who could

accomplish nothing, the man who possessed no power in this visible world. He was thin; he wasn't much. One thing about him, however—he was never known to desert other people if they had trouble. When women were in tears, he stayed by their side. When old folks were lonely, he sat with them quietly. It was nothing miraculous, but the sunken eyes overflowed with love more profound than a miracle. And regarding those who deserted him, those who betrayed him, not a word of resentment came to his lips. No matter what happened, he was the man of sorrows, and he prayed for nothing but their salvation.

That's the whole life of Jesus. It stands out clean and simple, like a single Chinese ideograph brushed on a blank sheet of paper. It was so clean and simple that no one could make sense of it, and no one could produce its like. (1973:173)

This passage is from the scene where Endo describes the disciples, who, recalling Jesus' life after his crucifixion, gradually start to understand the meaning of his life and death.⁷

In this passage, Endo depicts Jesus as the man of compassion who deeply shared the life of the people of his time. Through his compassionate sharing of their lives, their sufferings and pains became a part of his own life. He was totally open to the others, especially to those who had trouble. He accepted them with love, felt their feelings empathetically, internalized their experiences, and grieved and rejoiced with them. What Jesus shared most

⁷ In the preface to the book, Endo says, "My way of depicting Jesus is rooted in my being a Japanese novelist." This means that, unlike many theologians and biblical scholars, he is not interested primarily in the historical picture of Jesus. With a power of imagination peculiar to a novelist, he rather attempts "to make Jesus understandable in terms of the religious psychology of my non-Christian countrymen and thus to demonstrate that Jesus is not alien to their religious sensibilities." This consideration leads him to focus on "the kind-hearted maternal aspect of God revealed to us in the personality of Jesus" rather than "God in the father-image that tends to characterize Christianity" (1973:1). The contribution of Endo serves as an important source in our search for an image of the Christian God appropriate to the Asian context.

deeply with his people was their helplessness and powerlessness. Unlike us, his ability to be open to others and share their experiences knew no limit. This world, however, is full of suffering and pain. As a result, Jesus, who loved his fellow people in their totality, was inevitably filled with sorrow and pain. He was indeed “the man of sorrows.”

To love means to be open to others and share their lives, especially when they have trouble. Like Jesus, one who truly loves takes the sufferings and pains of others as if they were one’s own. Since one wishes the best for those one loves, one responds compassionately to their situations and makes efforts to create new possibilities for their lives. The more one loves, the more one shares and tries to create.

What was revealed in the compassionate love of Jesus was actually the love of God. Thus, God is the one who truly shares our life and responds creatively to it. God is love and God’s love is infinite and ultimate. God shares all human as well as all non-human experiences and events in the world. “God is indiscriminatingly benevolent towards all.” Thus “there are no distortions in God’s perceptions and concerns preventing God’s perfect openness toward all that is, human and nonhuman alike” (Cobb 1977:23). God’s self thus consists of all experiences and events in the whole world. In this sense, God is indeed

the complete, unqualified, everlasting actualization of *pratitya-samutpada*, dependent origination. It is precisely by being perfectly empty that God . . . is perfectly full. That is, God must be totally open to all that is and constituted by its reception. (Cobb 1982:113)

Though I disagree about Emptiness being the *ultimate* reality, Cobb is basically correct when he says

God is the ultimate *actuality*. God as the ultimate actuality is just as ultimate as is Emptiness as ultimate *reality*. Emptiness is different from God, and there is no God apart from Emptiness. But it is equally true to say there

is no Emptiness apart from God. Emptiness is not “above” or “beyond” God. (1982:112–13)

Ceaselessly feeling and experiencing the world as it really is (suchness), and creating for it new possibilities of life, which God also actualizes, God constantly gives hope to the world of suffering and pain, the world of transmigration. Thus, the empty God is truly the God of compassion—the God who is always with us in our worldly life.⁸

CONCLUSION

Buddhist Emptiness is one of the issues that arise out of inter-religious and cross-cultural dialogue, both between Christians and Buddhists and between Asians and Westerners. We also have to pay attention to other questions, such as the relation of God and Buddha, of Christ and Amida, of the kingdom of God and the Pure Land, and so on. Cobb himself examines some of these issues.

As suggested earlier, it is also important to compare the love of God and the compassion of the Bodhisattvas. Here the wrath of God becomes a key issue. It is often said that Buddhism has no counterpart to this Judaeo-Christian concept. This is because the Bodhisattvas' compassion is believed to be all-embracing, due to their vows to rescue all sentient beings from the world of Samsara. It is likely, however, that such an all-embracing nature of Buddhist compassion has paradoxically contributed to the failure of Buddhism to motivate the Japanese people to struggle for social justice in the modern history of their country. In this sense, the all-inclusiveness of the compassion of the Bodhisattvas could be one

⁸In addition to this, the empty God may also be described as the one who sees our reality of dependent origination from the authentically absolute epistemological standpoint. This is congruous with Cobb's view that “God may be conceived as the totally enlightened one, the supreme and everlasting Buddha” (1977:22).

of the important causes of the ethical weakness of Japanese culture.⁹

Further, if one is ready to affirm Cobb's theory that God is the manifestation of the ultimate reality or Emptiness, its cultural implication must be more carefully examined. This is especially the case in Japan, for this type of theory is no novelty for the Japanese. After the ancient Japanese accepted Buddhism in the sixth century, a similar theory was developed to smooth away the tension created by the conflict between this new religion and the traditional belief in the indigenous gods (*kami*) in Japan.

It was the theory that viewed the Japanese *kami* as the manifestations of the Buddha in this land. This view dominated the Japanese religious world until the middle of the nineteenth century (Kitagawa 1987:158–159). The syncretic way of religious thinking based on it remains influential even today. Cobb's theory recalls this ancient theory. What are the implications of this on the relationship between Christianity and the syncretic Japanese culture?

In spite of these questions, the analysis of Buddhist Emptiness and Cobb's response to it are fairly convincing. The Eastern mode of human experience can well be explained in the light of this Buddhist notion rather than the traditional philosophical and theological concepts of the West. As a result, the notion of Emptiness allows the Japanese to understand and interpret the Christian message in a more relevant and meaningful way in their own cultural setting. Other Buddhist notions also help them to struggle with Christianity in their non-Christian, Asian soil.

⁹ What I have in mind here is primarily the militaristic invasion and occupation by Japan of the neighboring Asian countries in the first half of the twentieth century and the racial and sexual discrimination dominating today's Japanese society. I am not unaware of the responsibility of Japanese Christians for taking part in them uncritically. One of the basic tasks facing the church in Japan is that of contributing with deep repentance toward transforming Japanese society into a truly open and just society in solidarity with sisters and brothers of other faiths and of no faith. Concerning the question of Buddhist ethics, I want to refer to the debate on the understanding of the Holocaust between Abe and Christian and Jewish theologians, Cobb included, contained in Cobb and Ives (1990) as an interesting and suggestive example.

Process theology will play a significant role in this attempt to contextualize the Christian faith. The modes of thinking found in process theology and Buddhism—especially Mahayana Buddhism—have strong affinities. With the help of Whiteheadian thought, process theologians try to provide a new philosophical vision for theology and reformulate this in a conceptual mode different from that of the traditional Christian thought in the West.

Process theology is therefore liberating Asian Christians from bondage to the Western Christian tradition and is giving them greater possibilities to theologize more freely in their own historical and cultural settings. Further, due to its affinities with Buddhism as well as its openness to Asian thought in general, process theology can bridge the gap between the West and the East. It can make dialogue effective and fruitful not only between Christians and Buddhists, but also between Asian and Western Christians. Daniel J. Adams correctly notes:

Process theology, with its fresh vision of the Christian faith, has done much to open the eyes of Asian students to the excitement of doing theology. Its openness to Buddhism and other forms of Asian thought make [*sic*] it especially suitable for cross-cultural and inter-religious dialogue. (1987:84)

Process theology, nevertheless, has a big problem. This problem derives mainly from its highly intellectual, philosophical tendency and its Whiteheadian language. Process theology will not be fully influential and productive among Christians unless this difficulty is properly overcome. This is the case in Asia, particularly in Japan. There, even the traditional type of Western philosophical language and thought is felt to be something alien by the common people. (This is why we have tried here to interpret and re-image the Christian God with the help of the Buddhist notion of Emptiness).

In spite of the conceptual affinities between process theology and Buddhism, Whiteheadian language is alien to most people in

Asia. For them, the Buddhist language is far more intelligible and appealing. This is obvious if one compares those concepts of process theology and Buddhism that, like creativity and dependent origination, have close, almost identifiable meanings.

Asian Christians need not accept process theology totally nor become process theologians. They should rather go further, searching more freely and boldly within their own historical, cultural, and spiritual heritages. And they should articulate their theological insights in their own language from within this heritage. Process theology will certainly give them significant support for this task.

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Bread As a Core Symbol

A Narrative Reading of John 6

CHERYL A. WUENSCH

INTRODUCTION

Source and redaction critical questions have impugned the narrative unity of John 6 to such a degree that some scholars believe the chapter to be a patchwork of narrative and discourse material, sewn together by a conservative redactor. This paper argues that John 6 forms a cohesive unit within the Gospel as a whole, a unit whose symbols enhance the author's overall narrative strategy.

We begin with an examination of the two main critical issues that challenge the unity of John 6. Next, a study of the meaning and function of symbolism as a narrative device precedes the main body of this paper: an exegetical analysis of the symbolic function of bread as a unitive force in John 6.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE UNITY OF JOHN 6

The first of two main challenges to the unity of John 6 involves the cycle of nature miracles at the beginning of the chapter. While scholars are in virtual agreement that the Gospel of John is of a different order than the Synoptics, there remains much debate about whether John¹ wrote independent of or dependent upon the synoptic Gospels.

¹ We use "John" to refer both to the final literary product of the Gospel and to the author(s) who compiled, composed, and edited that Gospel.

One of the strongest arguments marshalled by those who defend Johannine dependence on Mark centers on the similarities between John and Mark in these two nature miracles. First, the two pericopae occur in the same order in both Gospels (Jn 6:1-21 // Mk 6:32-52). The form critics contend that various stories circulated independently of one another and Mark was the first of our extant writings to connect the stories into a narrative. If so, John must have known Mark's ordering. There are also striking similarities in the details of the stories. For instance, in the first pericope "there is 'green grass' (Mk 6:39) or 'much grass' (Jn 6:10) in the place; five loaves and two fishes are available (Mk 6:38; Jn 6:9); the comment of the disciples (Mk 6:37; Jn 6:7) alludes to 'two hundred denarii'; the left-overs fill 'twelve baskets' (Mk 6:43; Jn 6:13); the number fed was about 'five thousand' (Mk 6:44; Jn 6:10)" (Schnackenburg 1990, 1:29).

Those scholars who argue for Johannine dependence on Mark are more inclined to see John 6 as a patchwork of source material, resulting from conservative redaction and reflecting little authorial or theological creativity. However, even if we grant scholars such as C. K. Barrett (1960), W. G. Kümmel (1975), and F. Neirnyck (1977) their claim of Johannine dependency on Mark, we are still obliged to explain why John has chosen to include *these particular stories* in his narrative. That is, even if John knew and used Mark, John certainly had no problem leaving Markan material out of his Gospel. So, if John borrowed these two nature miracles from Mark, they must have served the overall intent of the narrative and that of his theological and christological portrayals. Otherwise, he would surely have left them out. Thus, whether we posit Johannine dependency or not, we cannot avoid wrestling with *the function and meaning of these stories within John's narrative*. This study intends to show how these stories, whatever their origin, are intricately related to the central symbolism of bread, a symbol which unites the whole of John 6.

The second critical challenge to the unity of John 6 relates to the so-called eucharistic discourse in 6:52-59. Many scholars see this section as a later insertion into the Gospel which introduced

sacramental and/or ecclesiastical concerns.² The “interpolation theory” gains its primary force from the contrast between the metaphorical nature of the preceding discourse (6:31-51) and the stark realism of 6:52-59. While the former implies that the bread from heaven is to be “eaten” by faith, the latter unabashedly speaks of a real eating and drinking of the real flesh and blood of the Son of Man.³ Proponents of the interpolation theory believe 6:52-59 reinterprets the preceding discourse through a lens which views the sacramental meal of the Eucharist as a φάρμακον ἀθανασίας, the medicine of immortality (Ignatius 1985:95–99; cf. Bultmann 1971:219).

Additional arguments are mounted on behalf of viewing the so-called eucharistic discourse as an interpolation. G. Bornkamm believes that vv. 60-63 cannot refer back to vv. 51c-58 but must refer to the larger discourse on the bread from heaven (6:31-51b). That is, the “hard saying” of v. 60 is not the idea of eating Jesus’ flesh and drinking his blood but Jesus’ talk of the καταβαλεῖν of the Son of Man (Bornkamm 1956:166).

Finally, G. Bornkamm (1956:161–169) and R. Bultmann (1971: 218–220, 234–237) demarcate the so-called eucharistic discourse as vv. 51c-58, an outline differing from the one offered above. While omitting the summary statement in v. 59 is of little significance, a great deal is at stake by including v. 51c: “and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.” Bornkamm and Bultmann want to confine the identification of Jesus’ σὰρξ with the bread within the so-called eucharistic discourse, whereas those scholars interested in ascribing some sense of unity to the chapter view v. 51c as a key phrase which links the eucharistic material with the bread of life discourse (e.g., Schnackenburg 1990, 2:56–68).

²While the list of scholars who hold this position is lengthy, noteworthy is Rudolf Bultmann, who sees this as an addition by the so-called “ecclesiastical redactor” (1971:218–219).

³John uses a rare word several times in this section to describe vividly the act of eating (6:54, 56, 57, 58). The word τρώγω, which occurs only two other times in the New Testament (Mt 24:38; Jn 13:18), means literally “to gnaw” or “to munch” (Liddell and Scott 1968:1832; Bauer et al. 1979:829).

While the interpolation theory has some merit, a strong case can be made for regarding the so-called eucharistic discourse as an integral part of a cohesive narrative section that encompasses the entire chapter. First, E. Ruckstuhl has argued convincingly that 6:51c-58 cannot be regarded on linguistic grounds as non-Johannine (1951:220-271). Second, many of the prevalent ideas in the first section of the discourse are developed in 6:52-29: having eternal life (vv. 40, 47, 53-55); the resurrection at the last day (vv. 39, 40, 44, 54); eating and drinking (vv. 35, 53-56); the reappearance of $\beta\rho\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ (vv. 27, 55); Jesus as sent by the Father (vv. 29, 57); the identification of Jesus himself with that which is eaten (vv. 35, 48, 57); eating resulting in life (vv. 51, 57-58); bread from heaven (vv. 31-33, 41, 50-51, 58); the reference to "the fathers" eating manna yet dying (vv. 49, 58) (Dunn 1970-71:329). Third, P. Borgen's well-argued thesis (1965) that 6:31-58 forms a midrashic homily on the Old Testament quotation in v. 31 further supports the unity of the passage, rendering the interpolation theory far less plausible.

The primary argument in this paper is that the symbolism employed in 6:52-59 strengthens and enhances the core symbol of bread. Even if 6:52-59 stems from an early version of a Eucharist account, it has been tightly woven into its surrounding context by the pen of a truly creative author.

Having surveyed the two main source- and redaction-critical questions pertaining to John 6, it is important to make our position clear on the relationship between John and the Synoptics. In his most recent publication, D. M. Smith unmasks the utter complexity of the issue, admitting that his "study on the question of John and the Synoptics ends on an ambiguous note" (1992:185). Bearing in mind the precarious nature of the issue, I am in agreement with R. E. Brown's position that "John drew on an independent source of tradition about Jesus, similar to the sources that underlie the Synoptics" (1966:xlvii). While the following analysis of symbolism in John 6 refers to Markan parallels, it is not for the purpose of conducting a redactional study. Rather, it is to show how John has integrated materials similar to Mark's into

his version of the Jesus story in order to suit his own narrative intentions.

THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF SYMBOLISM

The Fourth Gospel is markedly different in style and content from the Synoptics. The Johannine Jesus speaks in long revelatory discourses, using language that is abstract and symbolic. Multifaceted concepts, such as “light,” “truth,” “life,” “believing,” and “knowing,” are an intricate part of the symbolic world of John’s narrative. Within this world, Jesus himself is the principal symbol because of his role as the vehicle of revelation. “Jesus is the symbol of God . . . the sensible expression of the transcendent . . . the locus of revelation (human or divine)” (Schneiders 1979:372). Symbols serve to disclose the many dimensions of that revelation with which John is concerned. Before moving on to the exegetical analysis of the text, it is first necessary to establish definitions, distinguish symbols from other literary devices, and examine how symbols function in a text.

R. Alan Culpepper’s *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* has been hailed as “the most comprehensive account to date of the narrative mechanics of a gospel” (Moore 1989:50). It presents a fruitful discussion on the function of symbolism in the Gospel of John. As Culpepper plots the reader’s role in negotiating the narrative (i.e., making sense out of it), he argues that symbols “carry the principal burden of the narrative and provide . . . directional signals for the reader” (1983:181). John’s narrative world consists of “upper” and “lower” spheres of reality, and the implied author has a “superior” viewpoint of those realities. The function of symbolism, therefore, is to invite the reader to “even richer and more stimulating views into the order and mystery of the world above” (1983:181).

In defining symbolism, Culpepper begins by noting the etymology of the word *symbol*, from the Greek verb συμβάλλω, which means “to put together” (cf. Liddell and Scott 1968:1674). In John, symbols bring together or act as “connecting links” between the two spheres of reality, above and below, the spheres of the

known and the unknown. Culpepper distinguishes between symbols and other narrative devices (such as metaphors, signs, and motifs) which are related to one another. A metaphor is “a device which speaks of one thing in terms that are appropriate to another” (1983:181), whereas a symbol is a device which points beyond itself to many things, carrying polyvalent meanings. In this way, a sign can be distinguished from a symbol in that the former points to only one thing while the latter points to many. Motifs, which can have a symbolic function, are recurrent themes or verbal patterns which achieve their effectiveness with cumulative use; symbols may occur only singly (1983:181–183).

In addition, symbols themselves can be divided into various categories. Wheelwright highlights three main categories on the basis of how symbols achieve their meaning. First, “symbols of ancestral vitality” are borrowed from earlier writings and merged with new meanings (e.g., the manna symbol is taken from the Old Testament). Second, “archetypal symbols” have virtually a universal meaning (e.g., bread is universally thought to be life-sustaining). Third, “symbols of cultural range” are drawn from the immediate social and historical context of the implied author and readers (e.g., is John’s bread symbolism related to the historical situation of the Johannine community?) (Wheelwright 1962:99–110; cf. Culpepper 1983:184).

Finally, there is a distinction between core and subordinate symbols. The former are central to the narrative in that they occur with a greater frequency, in more important contexts, and point to Jesus’ revelatory role. The latter, while replete with their own meaning, cluster around the primary core symbols, lending more weight and widening the range of referents within the core symbols (Culpepper 1983:189).

BREAD AS A CORE SYMBOL IN JOHN 6

Within the larger narrative context, chapter 6 is easily delineated from the surrounding material as a self-contained unit. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 all begin with the introductory phrase *μετὰ ταῦτα*, thus

indicating the opening of a new section in each case. Furthermore, the markers of place (Jerusalem 5:1; the other side of the sea of Galilee 6:1; Galilee 7:1), and the markers of time (a feast of the Jews 5:1; the Passover 6:4; the feast of Tabernacles 7:1) at the opening of these same sections additionally serve to delimit chapter 6 from the preceding and following chapters. More importantly, the core symbol of bread, which is completely absent in the surrounding material, is at the heart of the chapter 6, thus connecting the various pericopae within the unit into a thematic whole.⁴

John's version of the miraculous feeding (6:1-15) contains several unique details which cast the entire story (as well as the whole chapter) in a Passover/Exodus framework. The narrative setting of the Passover (6:4) is a detail which is exclusive to John. It sets the stage by invoking a "symbol of ancestral vitality." John's depiction of Jesus going up the mountain (6:3) adds to this Passover/Exodus imagery, for it would surely "recall the memory of Moses, whose ascent of Sinai is a constant feature of the Sinai tradition" (Schnackenburg 1990, 2:14). Unlike the Synoptic accounts, there is no mention of the disciple's remark that it was late in the day and the people were growing hungry (Mk 6:35-36; 8:2-3 and parallels). Instead, the Johannine Jesus takes the initiative by asking Philip, "How are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?" (6:5). This first reference to bread, the core symbol of the chapter, functions as an "archetypal symbol" in which bread represents the most basic source of physical nourishment (Behm 1964:477). Schnackenburg is correct in writing, "The bread which strengthens the body . . . points symbolically to a food which endures" (1990, 2:18).

Mark's parallel account has strong eucharistic significance. The verbs describing Jesus' action with the bread in John (taking, blessed, broke, and gave; 6:41) are identical and occur in the same order as those verbs in Jesus' initiation of the Eucharist according

⁴The lexical statistics are telling: the word ἄρτος appears twenty-two times in chapter 6 with only three other occurrences in the rest of the Gospel (13:18; 21:9, 13)!

to Mark 14:22.⁵ Imagining the Markan audience as ones who most likely heard his Gospel, the words used to describe Jesus' action in the miraculous feeding would most certainly have been associated with their own experience of a liturgical celebration of the Eucharist (a common practice among early Christians, as attested in 1 Cor 11).

Admittedly, the connections between the feeding miracle and the Eucharist are not as striking in John (due largely to the absence of Jesus' words of institution in the Fourth Gospel). However, the eucharistic overtones of John 6:1-15 are not altogether absent. John's report—"Then Jesus took the loaves (ἐλάβεν οὖν τοὺς ἄρτους), and when he had given thanks (καὶ εὐχαριστήσας), he distributed them" (6:11)—bears a clear resemblance to the words of institution as recounted by Paul: "He took bread (ἐλάβεν ἄρτον), and when he had given thanks (καὶ εὐχαριστήσας), he broke it" (1 Cor 11:23-24). Again, assuming that the Johannine community celebrated the Eucharist and was familiar with the words of institution similar to those recited in Corinth, John's narration of the miraculous feeding contains definite verbal affinities with early eucharistic practice.

If Mark and John drew on similar yet separate sources of tradition, the fact that both narratives betray a eucharistic significance, albeit less pronounced in John, suggests that this significance was already attributed to the miracle story in the early (probably oral) tradition. In constructing the chapter, John's authorial creativity shines through. John augments the eucharistic imagery and the symbolic function of bread by sandwiching two blocks of material with eucharistic overtones (6:1-15 and 6:52-59) around the bread of life discourse (6:22-51). This has the effect of uniting the chapter around the central symbol of bread and broadening the cluster of meanings associated with bread in the discourse material.

In verse 11, the Johannine Jesus himself—in distinction to the Synoptics—serves the bread to the crowd (Jn 6:11; cf. Mk 6:41 and

⁵ Note that with the omission of "he blessed" (εὐλόγησεν), the verbs in Mark's second feeding miracle are again identical (8:6).

parallels). This detail is significant because it betrays John's christological emphasis: Jesus himself is the giver of bread (cf. 4:14: Jesus as the giver of water). This offers a starting point for the revelatory discourse in which Jesus is identified as the bread of life which comes down from heaven.

Another feature unique to John's story is Jesus' command, "Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost" (6:12). The gathering of the leftovers of the bread that Jesus gives is surely meant to stand in contrast to manna, which could not be saved (Exod 16:16-20) because it perishes (Jn 6:27). Here, bread takes on the function of a "symbol of ancestral vitality," drawing upon, yet altering, Old Testament symbolism. The pericope concludes by reemphasizing the Passover/Exodus framework, a framework that becomes the *leitmotif* of the chapter: Jesus, like Moses, goes back up the mountain (6:15).

To summarize briefly, cast within a Passover/Exodus framework, the Fourth Evangelist first introduces the symbol of bread as that which sustains physical life. However, as the symbol grows and takes on multiple meanings, Jesus is portrayed as the giver of bread—not just any bread, but a bread quite unlike the perishable manna.

At first sight, the story of Jesus walking on the water (6:16-21) seems unrelated to the previous pericope, since the primary symbol of bread is absent. Rather than positing dependency on Mark, some scholars argue that the two stories had "already coalesced in the pre-Johannine tradition" (cf. Hans Weder and Robert T. Fortna in Smith 1992:186–187). Even if this be the case, it must still be demonstrated how this story conforms to the chapter and enhances John's narrative design.

Schnackenburg is correct when he identifies Jesus' ἐγώ εἰμι saying (6:20) as the key to this pericope (1990, 2:24–29). When viewed alongside the Synoptic parallels, John's authorial intent becomes clear. The Synoptics report that the disciples were afraid *because they thought the figure walking on the water was a ghost* (Mk 6:49 and parallels); Jesus' response, "ἐγώ εἰμι," while having overtones of the theophanic formula, serves primarily to ease the disciples'

fear by identifying himself: “It is I” (not a ghost). John’s version of the same story, although similar to the Synoptics in general content, contains a significant difference. The Johannine disciples recognized the figure walking on the sea as Jesus (6:19) and they did not fear it to be a ghost. Thus the RSV translation, “It is I” (Mk 6:50; Jn 6:20), is appropriate to Mark’s narrative context but not to John’s. John’s Jesus need not identify himself to the disciples because they already knew it was him.

Therefore, in to the Johannine context, the translation of ἐγώ εἰμι ought to be rendered as the emphatic form, “I am.” This translation of ἐγώ εἰμι has two important implications. First, the invocation of the theophanic formula disclosed to Moses at Sinai (Exod 3:14) continues to augment the Passover/Exodus *leitmotif* of this chapter.⁶ Second, the “I am” saying prefigures the same epiphanic formula used four additional times in this chapter to reveal Jesus as the bread from heaven (cf. 6:35, 41, 48, 51). In sum, by placing the words ἐγώ εἰμι on the mouth of Jesus in this pericope, the evangelist “creates a basis for Jesus’ revelation of himself as the bread of life which has come down from heaven, which is bound up with this epiphany formula” (Schnackenburg 1990, 2:28–29).

Scholarly attempts to determine the structure and outlines of the following material—the long discourse in which Jesus reveals himself as the bread of life (6:22–59)—have been far from unanimous. R. Schnackenburg points out that different readings are possible depending on whether one is paying attention to the dialogue framework, a strophic construction, or conceptual units (1990, 2:31). In fact, a wholly different reading emerges if one adopts P. Borgen’s thesis that the entire discourse section is a midrash on the biblical quotation in v. 31 (1965). This lack of agreement on how to delineate the material in vv. 22–59 indicates how tightly woven the final product of chapter 6 really is. Whatever sources and redactions may comprise this section, the rem-

⁶ R. E. Brown suggests that a “Passover symbolism” is operative in Jesus’ walking on the sea, which parallels the crossing of the Reed Sea during the Exodus (1966, 29:255).

nants of such have been so well hidden and intertwined that the final author(s) must have intended the unit to be read as a whole.

As the chapter continues to unfold in the long discourse section which follows, so too does the polyvalence of the symbol. A narrative transition, effected by the use of the catchword ἄρτος (6:24), provides the link to the discourse on the bread of life (vv. 22-26): "the next day" the crowd seeks Jesus because they ate their fill of bread. Jesus' response in v. 27 contains many of the possibilities of what will be disclosed in the discourse: "Do not labor for food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you; for in him has God the Father set his seal." The reference to βρώσις should here be seen as part of the expanding symbol of bread. In this respect, John sets in juxtaposition that food which perishes (manna) with that which endures (the bread which Jesus gives). The long discourse that follows develops the symbol. That which endures is the true bread from heaven and it is given by the Father (6:32); this bread comes down from heaven and gives life to the world (6:33).

To dispel the potential misunderstanding within the crowd that the "bread from heaven" was manna given by Moses (6:31; cf. Exod 16:4 LXX), Jesus utters decisive words, invoking the epiphanic formula: "I am the bread of Life" (6:35). Lest any misunderstanding remain, Jesus makes the same claim in v. 48, and the symbol is further amplified with Jesus' assertion, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (6:51; cf. 6:41). This constitutes a progressively deepening disclosure of the breadth and width of the symbol of bread: Jesus, who was earlier depicted as the giver of bread, is now identified as the gift of bread itself. Thus, in the terminology of the discourse, "the feeder becomes . . . the food" (Culpepper 1983:196).

Within this development of the bread symbolism, two prominent motifs are advanced. First, John continues to extend the Passover/Exodus *leitmotif*: like the Israelites brought out of Egypt under the guidance of Moses, the crowd "murmurs" at Jesus' proclamation (6:41, 43; cf. Exod 15:24; 16: 2, 7, 12; 17:3; Num 11:1; 14:2, 27).

John's choice of the word γογγύζειν to describe the crowd's response is significant because "already in the Old Testament, this behaviour . . . was regarded as unbelief (Ps 105:24-25 LXX)" (Schnackenburg 1990, 2:49). The crowd's response signifies their rejection of Jesus' strong emphasis on believing as the necessity for eternal life (6:29, 30, 35, 36, 40, 47). Second, the Son of Man saying (6:27), coupled with the extended imagery of the ascending bread from heaven (6:31, 32, 33, 41, 50, 51, 58), brings into play the whole complex of ideas about ascending and descending, a Johannine Christology which depicts Jesus as the man who comes down from heaven and ascends there again (Meeks 1972:44-72).

Within the larger narrative context, bread is related closely to the symbol of water. The parallels between the discourse with the Samaritan woman and the discourse on the bread of life are striking: just as Jesus shall give (δώσω) "a spring of water welling up to eternal life (ζωὴν αἰώνιον)" (4:14), so too shall he give (δώσω; 6:51) the bread of eternal life (ζωὴν αἰώνιον; 6:27, 54). In addition to being associated with eternal characteristics, both elements are said to be "living": ὕδωρ ζῶν (4:10) and ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν (6:51). Bread as the symbolic counterpart to water is further evidenced by Jesus' expression in this chapter, "I am the bread of life; the one who comes to me shall not hunger, and the one who believes in me shall not thirst" (6:35).

These twin images of hunger and thirst are much more than rhetorical decoration. Most obviously, the images correspond to the core symbol of bread in chapter 6 and that of water in chapter 4. Furthermore, the two nature miracles at the beginning of the chapter (6:1-15 and 6:16-21) center upon the elements of bread and water. In addition, within the Passover/Exodus framework of John 6, hunger and thirst correspond to the gifts of manna and water from the rock in the wilderness (Exod 16-17). Finally, the images also represent the subordinate symbols of flesh and blood, and eating and drinking, symbols expounded in the last section of the discourse (6:53-56).

As the giver *and* embodiment of these gifts, only Jesus satiates hunger and thirst. As the discourse continues, the imagery evoked

in association with the symbol of bread reaches its most graphic proportions. Jesus claims, “The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh” (6:51c). The symbol has been enlarged to such an extent as now to include the concept of σάρξ. The stretching of the symbol reaches its climax with the advocacy by Jesus of what appears to be a crude cannibalism: “gnawing on” his flesh and drinking his blood (6:53-56). Jesus’ σάρξ is the bread which came down from heaven (6:58). Unlike the other “bread from heaven” (manna), which “the fathers ate and died” (6:58), eating Jesus’ σάρξ brings ζωὴν αἰώνιον (6:54, 58).

Given our position as twentieth-century interpreters of a first-century text and our lengthy history of sacramental theology and praxis, one wonders whether we are capable of understanding language about eating flesh and drinking blood apart from the sacrament of the Eucharist. Indeed, many exegetes think the entire bread discourse was intended to be interpreted through a sacramental lens.⁷ But were the first readers and auditors of John’s Gospel likely to have interpreted the discourse in this way? The answer to this question is likely to be found in two places: (1) the literary design of John’s Gospel, and (2) the social setting of the Johannine community.

As mentioned at the outset, symbolism functions as a narrative device which invites the reader to richer understandings of the mysterious order of the “upper” sphere of reality. In the course of John 6, the symbol of bread evokes several concepts, many of which are held together in tension with one another and appear to be paradoxical: bread as physical sustenance, bread something different from manna, bread as that which is given by the Father, bread as that which comes down from heaven, bread as the vehicle of eternal life, Jesus as giver of bread, Jesus as bread, the flesh of Jesus as bread, and the consumption of Jesus’ flesh as that which gives eternal life.

If a symbol points to many things beyond itself, then it logically follows that the meaning of a symbol cannot be exhausted by a

⁷R. E. Brown lists several scholars who adhere to this interpretation: Loisy, Tobac, Cullmann, and van den Bussche (1965:78).

literal interpretation of the primary concept it evokes. That is, symbolic language is figurative and metaphorical interpretations are necessary to understand the meanings of a symbol. Therefore, the symbol of eating bread, found throughout the *entire* chapter (6:5, 23, 26, 31, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58), cannot point solely to actual physical consumption. J. D. G. Dunn rightly notes that on a metaphorical level, “eating . . . represents the act of coming to and believing in Jesus and the resulting eternal life” (1970-71:335; cf. Thompson 1988:47). Hence, Jesus’ emphasis on believing (6:29, 30, 35, 36, 40, 47) corresponds to the similar emphasis on eating.

In addition, Jesus’ proclamation in v. 63, “It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail,” guards against a literal interpretation of the so-called eucharistic discourse. John uses the poignant metaphor of consuming Jesus to signify that the one who totally and wholeheartedly believes in (and ingests) Jesus’ words will receive the spirit (6:63b, 68) and eternal life (6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68).

A brief investigation into the social setting of the Johannine community proves helpful in an attempt to decipher the graphic symbol of gnawing on Jesus’ flesh. As J. Louis Martyn has observed, the Gospel of John is a “two-level drama.” Thinly veiled in the narrative are indications of what was occurring in the Johannine community (1979). It has been argued that the Johannine community was one in which the Christology of docetism made a strong challenge. The concept of σάρξ in John, used to designate the sphere of humanity (i.e., the “lower” sphere) in its transitoriness (Bultmann 1971:62), stresses the utter offensiveness of the incarnation: καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο (1:14). John’s expansion of the symbol of bread to include the vivid concepts of flesh and eating “is best understood as a deliberate attempt to exclude docetism by heavily, if somewhat crudely, underscoring the reality of the incarnation in all its offensiveness” (Dunn 1970-71:336; cf. Schnelle 1987:226–228 and Schnackenburg 1990, 2:61). In this way, the symbol of bread, drawing on the specific historical situation facing the Johannine community to achieve its meaning, functions as “a symbol of cultural range.”

In the so-called eucharistic discourse, the twin symbols of flesh (σάρξ) and blood (αἷμα) in 6:53-56, while corresponding to other subordinate and core symbols in the narrative (eating and drinking, hunger and thirst, bread and water), have an even greater significance. As mentioned, σάρξ should be understood as a reference primarily to the incarnation (1:14), that is, to the divine becoming flesh. In like manner, the symbol of blood points to *its only other referent* in the remaining chapters of the narrative: Jesus' bloody death on the cross (19:34).⁸ *Flesh* points to the beginning of the Gospel, *blood* to the end. *Flesh* denotes the incarnation, *blood* the crucifixion. The symbolism employed in the "eucharistic" verses does not correspond strictly to a liturgical celebration of the Lord's Supper. Rather, it invites the reader to a richer understanding of the mysterious order of the two spheres of reality: eating and drinking denotes believing in and accepting the incarnation and the crucifixion of Jesus.

This vivid teaching issued such a great demand for believing on Jesus' followers that it plays a pivotal role in the chapter as well as the Gospel. Whereas "a multitude followed him" (6:2) at the opening of the chapter, this "hard saying" (6:66)⁹ is cause for many of Jesus' disciples to withdraw, no longer going about with him (6:66). In addition, the narrative placement of the teaching on the bread of life suggests that this "hard saying" inaugurates the plot of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι to kill Jesus (7:1). Understood on a literal level, gnawing on the flesh and drinking the blood of a human being is abhorrent. On a symbolic level, accepting the incarnation and death of the Jesus the Messiah is indeed "hard." For Simon Peter, who had a greater understanding of the mysterious order of the "upper" sphere of reality, Jesus' words of proclamation, "I am

⁸ Among the evangelists, only John reports that Jesus' side was pierced with a spear and that blood and water came out (19:34; cf. 1 Jn 5:6, 8). This unique detail is associated with the core symbol of water and its interrelatedness with bread.

⁹ The adjective used to describe the saying as "hard" (σκληρός) means "harsh" or "unpleasant" (Bauer et al. 1979:756) and should not be interpreted as meaning "hard to understand." The listeners certainly understood Jesus' words but were not able to accept them.

the bread of life," shed light on his true identity: Jesus is "the Holy One of God" (6:69).

CONCLUSION

In contrast to those who see John 6 as a collection of disparate source material, this essay has argued that the evangelist has artfully designed a cohesive narrative unit. This cohesiveness is achieved by the use of the symbol of bread, placing it at the heart of the chapter. The core symbol draws its meaning from a variety of referents: Old Testament tradition, universally accepted notions, and the social and historical circumstances facing the Johannine community. In John's narrative, symbols act as connecting links, inviting the reader to seek greater insight into the mysterious order of John's symbolic world. The symbolism evoked points to Jesus' role as the one who engenders the intersection between the two spheres of reality, above and below, eternal life and death.

As the chapter unfolds, the conceptual field of the core symbol of bread grows, absorbing more and more images: bread as physical sustenance, Jesus as the giver of bread, bread as something different from manna, the Father as the giver of bread, bread as that which comes down from heaven, bread as the vehicle of eternal life, and Jesus as bread. The expansion of the symbol of bread reaches its climax in the so-called eucharistic discourse. Jesus' words advocate, in graphic and offensive terms, gnawing on his flesh and drinking his blood. For those who are drawn into the symbolic world of the narrative, John 6 demands of the reader a profound appropriation of the incarnation and crucifixion of the Holy One of God as the means to eternal life.

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Book Reviews

The Women's Bible Commentary. Edited by Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe. SPCK and Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992, 396 pages.

Almost one hundred years after the publication of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible* (1895–1898) and her then unanswered plea for women versed in biblical criticism to contribute to that work, editors Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe have marshalled the considerable scholarly talents of forty-one women to create *The Women's Bible Commentary*.

Like the former volume, this contribution does not seek to be a general or complete one-volume commentary on the Bible. Each article on a biblical book does begin with a general introduction which outlines the contents, historical location, and major issues raised by the book. However, rather than attempting to explicate each passage of the Bible, the authors have selected for comment, based on the presence or absence of women in the texts, only those portions which seemed to them to have particular relevance for women. By this formula the editors intend, without attempting to sort out or direct the various directions that feminist study of the Bible has taken, to assist women in reading the Bible self-consciously as women and in the company of other women (p. xv). In this respect the volume achieves far more than was intended, for it also offers men an opportunity to read the Bible from a fresh, if often challenging, perspective.

Besides providing commentary on each book of the Bible (generally following the Protestant canon in number and order) the book boasts of helpful articles treating feminist hermeneutics, the Apocrypha, the extra-canonical writings, and twin essays on women in the period of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. The editorial decision to place these last two contributions after, rather than before, the commentary on the Hebrew books and the New Testament writings respectively was unfortunate since the essays provide a sociological and historical picture of ancient women which is often assumed by the various commentators. Unhappy too was the decision to refrain from providing an extensive bibliography with each chapter. The absence of useful bibliographies and the paucity of footnotes or other citations will prove irritating to the reader who wishes to pursue a subject further.

Although the commentators share neither a uniform methodology, religious background, nor even a common approach to the issues forwarded by feminist study of the Bible, they do all give allegiance both to the historical-critical method and to the conviction that the received biblical texts are androcentric and patriarchal in character. The commentators frequently expose the male bias of the biblical authors and excavate beneath the androcentric veneer, where possible, to uncover insight about the true nature and status of women's lives and religious activity.

Most interesting are the treatments of those books in which women are prominently absent. Here the commentary on the significance of women is circumscribed to a great extent by the limitations of a biased biblical text. For example, Alice L. Laffey's discussion of women in 1 and 2 Chronicles is constrained by the observation that the Chronicler's treatment of the traditions (including traditions about women) is subordinated to that author's concern to portray David as Israel's foremost hero (p. 111f). For this reason the Chronicler has little to say about women, apart from a sporadic listing of women's names among the genealogies and the tacit androcentric assessment that even the Deuteronomic historian's scant store of tales about women was

detrimental to the image of David as hero. The bias of the biblical author allows Laffey to contain her comments on the Chronicler's treatment of women to a mere four pages, notwithstanding the relative length of the biblical book. The absence of women in the biblical text poses similar problems for Pheme Perkins and E. Elizabeth Johnson in their respective treatments of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, as well as for a number of other writers.

On the other hand, a few books in which women are not prominent nevertheless provide fertile ground for feminist reflection. Carol A. Newsom, noting that the women mentioned in Job have only "bit parts," observes that in spite of this limitation the book treats issues important to feminist theology, such as "the significance of personal experience as a source of religious insight, the importance and difficulty of solidarity among those who are oppressed, a critique of traditional models of God, and the relationship between human existence and the whole of creation" (p. 130). Less perspicacious is Kathleen A. Farmer's treatment of Psalms. Noting that explicit references to women are limited in the psalms, she restricts herself to a general discussion of psalm types and themes. Only Psalms 8 and 131 are treated in any detail. Other possibilities for feminist reflection inherent in the Psalter—for instance, that the psalms of lament might provide a voice to articulate the experience of oppressed or battered women—seem to have escaped the author.

One noteworthy theme woven through a number of the essays is the condemnation of the tendency—ubiquitous among the Hebrew prophets and later reflected in Revelation—to employ metaphors in which female figures personify the nation, the city of Jerusalem, or enemy states. This literary device, along with the prophets' penchant for vilifying women as particularly responsible for unacceptable behaviors within the Yahwistic community, is lamented throughout the book since it is demonstrably coupled to a history of violence, degradation, and abuse heaped upon women.

Similarly, several authors express discomfort with the various permutations of the marriage metaphor which appear widely in

the Hebrew canon and the New Testament, since such language has historically been linked with the abuse of power and male domination. Judith E. Sanderson (especially in her commentary on Nahum) and Susan R. Garret (Revelation) are particularly persuasive in urging that alternative language be sought to portray God as well as the idea of God's anger and punishment. The biblical metaphors are dangerous, perhaps beyond redemption for our age. As Sanderson notes, "It is dangerous enough that God is depicted as male while human beings are female. The danger is greatly compounded when God is depicted as a male who proves his manhood and superiority through violent and sexual retaliation against women" (p. 221).

While one may differ with the conclusion adduced on this and other issues raised in the volume, the value of the work as a whole lies in its sustained challenge to read the Bible through new eyes and in the company of women. In so doing, one discovers fresh insights into texts, intriguing possibilities for preaching, and the reappearance of women in the stories of faith.

—WALTER C. BOUZARD, JR.

Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation. Edited by Cain Hope Felder. Fortress Press, 1991, 260 pages.

The story of the relationship of Euro-Western biblical scholarship to the plight of people of African descent in North America is in many ways a sad and sordid tale. The biblical interpretations produced in the matrix of Euro-Western cultural and ideological domination have often justified and even facilitated the horrors of violent exploitation and subjugation that have characterized African peoples' collective sojourn in America.

A well-known example of the use of the Bible to legitimize oppression is the interpretation of the Noah/Ham story (Gen 9:25–27) as a biblical justification for the enslavement of African peoples (a reading offered in crude form as early as 1521 by the German scholar, Johan Boemus). The near exclusion of African

Americans and their perspectives from Euro-American biblical academies has helped to maintain Euro-Western hegemony in North American biblical studies. African Americans currently constitute just one-fifth of one percent (.002) of all North American biblical scholars with doctorates.

Stony the Road We Trod, which is the collective effort of eleven of these African American scholars, is the first such joint work to appear. It was written to contest the Euro-Western hegemony in biblical studies that has proven to be anathema to the interests of African Americans. In this sense, the book is a contemporary resistance text. While its overall tone is impassioned, it is not an exercise in polemics or stridency. Rather, its eleven studies are works of responsible and studied biblical scholarship.

Cain Hope Felder's introduction relates anecdotes from the authors (without attribution) about their struggles as African Americans in general and African American biblical scholars in particular. One contributor relates being a near victim of a lynch mob in his youth. These anecdotes set the almost religiously zealous tone of struggle against racist Euro-American domination of biblical studies that permeates *Stony*.

In the first of four topical sections, "The Relevance of Biblical Scholarship and the Authority of the Bible," contributors Thomas Hoyt, Jr., William H. Myers, and Renita Weems lay out the methodological and hermeneutical terrain of the book. Myers alerts the reader to some of the ideological and cultural biases inherent in traditional Euro-Western biblical scholarship. Weems examines the hermeneutic by which African American women, "marginalized by gender and ethnicity, and often class," continue to cull life-sustaining meaning from androcentric biblical texts overlaid by centuries of self-gratifying male bias. Both Myers and Weems challenge African American men and women to shift the locus of biblical authority from the perspectives of the dominant Euro-American culture to the salvation drama inscribed in their own experiences of God.

In "African American Sources for Enhancing Biblical Interpretation," Vincent L. Wimbush offers a taxonomy for the history

of biblical interpretation in the black church. David T. Shannon uses a famous sermon-in-verse to discuss what he contends are the major issues and considerations historically underlying an African American biblical hermeneutic.

The essays that most directly refute racist biblical interpretations appear as the third section under the heading, "Race and Ancient Black Africa in the Bible." Here, authors Felder, Randall Bailey, and Charles Copher confront particular misreadings of the presence and legacy of African peoples in the Bible. They expose the specter of racism looming behind those readings.

In the final section, "Reinterpreting Biblical Texts," the authors address particular instances of social subordinationism that appear to have biblical sanction. Through a source-critical analysis of Genesis 16 and 21, John Waters challenges the traditional view that Hagar, the Egyptian mother of Abraham's son, Ishmael, was a slave. In her careful study of the subordinationist *Haustafeln* ("household codes"), Clarice Martin examines the social origins and functions of those codes and surveys the various dominationist readings of them. Her critical gaze includes gender domination of black women by black men. Lloyd Lewis examines Paul's use of "familial language." He argues that although Paul's theology is neither patently pro- nor anti-slavery (white and black scholars have argued both positions strongly), Paul's "unwillingness to canonize the social roles found in his environment" suggests an ultimate Pauline rejection of slavery.

While well-written and researched, *Stony the Road We Trod* seems unsure of its audience. Hoyt's essay is clearly for the layperson, but Waters' use of source criticism (the basic tenets of which he never explains) seems intended for seminarians and graduate students.

In addition, the scope of the book is too broad. Both the generalities of Wimbush's interpretive history and the particulars of Shannon's sermon case study seem out of place in a collection focusing on the analysis of biblical texts and themes. Moreover, Wimbush's categories are insufficiently nuanced by the diversities of region, class, denomination, and material conditions in African American life. Thus, his taxonomy is not fully persuasive. Further-

more, Water's argument is circuitous, lacking in focus, and thus, is ultimately unconvincing.

The most glaring weakness in *Stony the Road We Trod* is that it leaves completely unaddressed several issues vital to a truly critical reading of Euro-Western biblical scholarship. For example, although the terms *Eurocentric* and *Afrocentric* are juxtaposed throughout the book and are used in some sense by most of the contributors, they are not adequately defined by any of them. Therefore, one is never sure whether *Eurocentrism* refers to banal European ethnocentrism or to the particular Europe-centered historiographic distortion African American critical theorists understand it to be. Nor is it clear whether *Afrocentrism* denotes simply African American ethnocentrism or whether it is a conscious counter-hegemonic corrective to the scourge of the Euro-Western world order.

Also left unaddressed is the historical construct of "Hellenism." In wide use today, this construct has been attacked as ideologically driven and subtly racist in orientation because it severs the more philosophically "rational" biblical concepts and texts from their historic cultural and philosophical moorings in the Afro-Asiatic nexus and instead attributes them to Greek (read "early European") influences. Nor does the book consider the structural-functionalist sociological bias that underlies most Euro-Western biblical scholarship. This methodological slant generally depoliticizes and obfuscates instances of anti-imperialist sentiment in the New Testament. In effect, it removes a source of inspiration—and biblical legitimacy—for similar resistance responses by victims of contemporary imperialism and neocolonialism throughout the world.

In a text seeking to reorder the terrain of interpretive authority for an oppressed people, one would like to see more attention paid to the biblical anti-dominationist themes and texts. Such themes include the politically radical ancient Hebrew underpinnings of the "kingdom of God" (מְלָכוּת הַשָּׁמַיִם) and the excoriation of brutal Roman domination that forms a subtext of the Book of Revelation. In addition, a wider methodological variety would

be welcome, including at least a nod to historical materialist sensibilities.

Despite its shortcomings, after reading this book, only the most myopic will continue to accept Euro-Western interpretations and definitions as normative for biblical studies. *Stony the Road We Trod* constitutes an important first step in the ongoing struggle to challenge the Euro-Western hegemony in biblical interpretation and to transform the Bible from a tool of Eurocentric oppression to a key in the liberation of African peoples everywhere.

—OSAYANDE OBERY HENDRICKS

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The Gospel of Peace: A Scriptural Message for Today's World. By Ulrich W. Mauser. Studies in Peace and Scripture. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992, 196 pages.

The Gospel of Peace is a fresh attempt to explicate the alleged New Testament theology of peace on exegetical and hermeneutical grounds. The series preface indicates that this is the first in a series of publications planned by the Institute of Mennonite Studies entitled "Studies in Peace and Scripture." The series is to reexamine the biblical texts on the issues of peace and war in the context of "serious moral and theological reflection" (p. viii).

In his preface, Mauser offers three reasons for why this study is needed. First, previous treatments have inadequately correlated the Old and New Testaments with regard to peace. Second, the times require a new look at these issues. (For this reason, the first and last chapters focus on the contemporary scene.) Third, Mauser maintains that the New Testament itself allows for the construction of a "meaningful synthesis" on peace.

Mauser begins by describing in dark detail the threat posed by the world arms race and by the economic cost of war and preparation for war. The increasing danger of war and the self-imposed poverty of war preparations underscore the need for a renewed commitment to peacemaking. In chapter two, Mauser examines the main biblical words for peace, *שלום* and *εἰρήνη*. This

word study emphasizes the broad range of meaning of שלום, which encompasses material welfare, physical health, justice, order, prosperity, and international harmony.

Chapter three is a redactional analysis of Matthew and Luke into which Mauser intersperses comparisons with the broader literature of Early Judaism. He argues that Matthew treats peace-making as an essential aspect of the dawning of the kingdom of heaven (p. 37). In Luke, peace is “an organizing concept for his presentation of the life of Jesus and his community” (p. 49). The word *peace* captures “the essence of ‘gospel’ and of the resistance against it” (p. 49).

In chapter four, Mauser looks at Matthew’s handling of opposition to the gospel. He suggests that Matthew was a direct response to the continuing messianic and political hopes inspired by the Jewish revolt of 66–74 C.E. Mauser argues that Matthew was written in part as an anti-Zealot—or at least anti-revolutionary—polemic. In chapter five, Mauser says that although Luke knows and admits to problems in the Roman system, he presents the *Pax Romana* positively, as an ally to the *Pax Christi*. Mauser focuses on Paul’s writings in chapter six. Paul repeatedly speaks of God as the “God of peace.” Mauser argues for an already/not yet tension in Paul’s understanding of the realization of peace in the Christian community.

In chapter seven, Mauser looks at peace in Colossians and Ephesians. He draws heavily on Eduard Lohse’s work on the theology and purpose of Colossians. Mauser argues that these letters offer new dimensions of peace that are unique within the New Testament (p. 137). Ephesians’ theology of peace is a sociological, reconciliatory theology concerned with peace between alienated groups. Ephesians visualizes “an alternative society, grounded on peace, spreading peace, and preserving peace” (p. 160). Ephesians emphasizes that peace is connected closely to the issue of competing allegiances.

The final chapter is the most important in the book. Mauser lays a bold and direct challenge at the feet of New Testament interpreters with the claim that the majority of Christendom has been wrong about peace and about the nature of the gospel itself. In this chapter, Mauser implicitly rejects both deontological and teleological approaches to ethics. His emphasis on the need for

discernment is reminiscent of Paul Lehmann's contextual ethics. He concludes that a faithful reading of the New Testament requires at minimum the destruction of all existing nuclear weapons and a refusal to participate in the military, even in a noncombatant role. Such a reading also requires one to express one's compassion actively in the world, to rethink the Christian response to evil and oppression, and to repudiate revenge as a sub-Christian response to evil.

In delineating the Old Testament's perspective on "Shalom and the King," Mauser treats only pro-kingship texts. He does not look at the critiques of kingship or deal theologically with the diversity of perspectives within the Old Testament. Nor does Mauser address the classic questions about the problem of war in the Old Testament or how the divine warrior image functions theologically in either testament. In his treatment of Early Judaism, Mauser does not consider the various nonmessianic forms of hope in a restored Israel, such as that in *Vita Adae et Evae*.

In the preface, Mauser notes that he has omitted some details in the book, "such as the Johannine teaching on peace." But the Johannine literature and its perspective on peace may represent more than a "detail" easily omitted. The Fourth Gospel in particular paradoxically combines teaching on love with harsh judgment upon unbelievers. And the Apocalypse of John seems to combine a resistance ethic with a spirit of vengeance toward those who practice injustice.

The Gospel of Peace is well-informed and reflects years of textual study, but its deductive approach makes it difficult to assess the relative importance of peace within the New Testament authors' larger theological interests. Mauser's word study on שָׁלוֹם and εἰρήνη also tends to imply that meanings inhere in individual words and semantic domains, rather than in authors or in texts read as a whole—or in the *process* of reading and interpreting. This approach also obscures the possibility that some New Testament material may be highly relevant to a theology of peace even though the word *peace* is missing or insignificant in the book.

Mauser's emphasis on the broad range of meaning inherent in the words only underscores the problem of how one can arrive at a meaningful synthesis on peace. It is ironic that having begun with semantic concerns, Mauser does not often define peace as used by

the individual New Testament authors. Mauser also underplays the differences of perspective on peace within the New Testament. For instance, he ignores the differences between Luke and the Apocalypse on the value of the *Pax Romana*.

Mauser does not venture to suggest how his understanding of the New Testament theology of peace fits with Paul Lehmann's contextual ethics as reflected in *Transfiguration of Politics* or with Stanley Hauerwas's *Peaceable Kingdom* or with John Yoder's *Politics of Jesus*. Although Mauser could not interact extensively with Christian ethicists in such a book, some hints of how he positions himself in relation to some of them would have been useful. Unfortunately, the lack of footnotes in the book and the concern to communicate effectively to a general audience result in a loss of opportunities for Mauser to interact with the secondary literature in biblical studies and theological ethics.

In spite of these criticisms, Mauser has succeeded well in incorporating careful exegetical work in a book highly readable for a general audience. *The Gospel of Peace* is a forceful, compelling book. The last chapter, especially, demands response. The book is full of exegetical insights that have too often been lost in the filter of so-called political realism. It makes a strong contribution to the discussion on the nature and relative importance of peace in the New Testament.

—LOREN L. JOHNS

Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ. By Klaus Wengst. Tr. by John Bowden. Fortress Press, 1987, 245 pages.

Klaus Wengst, professor of New Testament at the Ruhr University in Bochum, Germany, specializes in the social history of early Christianity. John Bowden, the translator, is responsible for abridging Wengst's original German-oriented notes in preparation for the English publication.

Wengst scrutinizes the effects of Roman rule throughout the "known world" of the Mediterranean basin in the first century C.E., comparing the assessments offered by various people of differing social status and setting. Recognizing that history

normally has been recorded by the victors, he searches for alternative perspectives, particularly those from the underside of life. Wengst's thesis can be summarized concisely: The Roman peace was experienced as a golden age of security and prosperity by the upper-class Romans and their provincial collaborators alone. Most others experienced the *Pax Romana* as a vicious calm, with order maintained through the ready exercise of institutional violence and the economic wellbeing of a few derived from the enforced poverty of many.

The mere absence of war is not peace, in Wengst's analysis. A proper evaluation of the period must account for the full spectrum of opinion. He concludes that the celebration of the *Pax Romana* as a golden age was a vacuous claim.

In a brief preface and introduction, Wengst discloses that he offers his work as a contribution to the European peace movement. The bulk of the book is then divided into two major sections. In the first, Wengst surveys the disparate assessments of non-Christian historians regarding the military, political, economic, legal, cultural, and religious advantages and disadvantages of Roman rule (pp. 7–54). Aelius Aristides and Plutarch displayed exuberant rhetoric in describing this “best and happiest period in world history” (p. 7). Virgil, Seneca, Pliny, Tacitus, and Josephus were somewhat more realistic, but still showed a decided enjoyment of the benefits of privileged life. Hostility filters through from two voices “from below”: the seer of 4 Ezra and the speech of the British chief, Calgacus (as recorded in Tacitus), who offered the famous observation that the Romans “make a desolation and call it peace” (p. 52).

Could Wengst find only two authors to speak for the opposition? Indeed, the example of Calgacus is suspicious in its own right. Many commentators hold that the speech is the creation of Tacitus, placed on the lips of the Britain for rhetorical effect. Wengst could have strengthened his case by culling more from the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (though he does briefly cite the Sibylline Oracles in his notes).

In the second major section (pp. 55–135), Wengst turns to the evaluation of the *Pax Romana* exhibited by early Christians.

Insightful commentary (and speculation) can be found throughout the section. He concludes from an examination of texts like Mk 12:13–17 (the taxation coin) that Jesus followed a wily course in which he implicitly criticized the Roman peace, yet refused to throw in with the Zealots.

An assessment of Paul is the cutting edge in any such discussion. Wengst warns against reading Rom 13:1–7 in isolation, ignoring—as has happened so frequently—Paul’s broader perspective about the limits of Christian allegiance. This broader perspective is evident in Paul’s remarks concerning citizenship in heaven in Phil 3:20f and in the testimony he offered about his personal encounters with Roman violence (e.g., 2 Cor 11:23–27).

Wengst acknowledges that Luke was far more accepting of the status quo, eager to depict Roman institutions in a positive light. He attributes this perspective largely to Luke’s upper-class social position. But Luke’s attitude toward Rome remains a source of considerable debate among scholars. Wengst has not squared his claim that Luke-Acts demonstrates a position of noninvolvement in social issues with the emphasis on good news to those on the margins of life. Perhaps recognizing this, Wengst steps outside the canon to highlight the positive appraisal of Rome found in 1 Clement, with its expectation that Christians will offer their undivided loyalty to the empire. The final contrast is provided by the Apocalypse, according to Wengst, which paints a picture of the state in ever-darker strokes. The Apocalypse calls the state the Great Beast, the representative of Satanic power, and assures the reader that this government is not ordained by God.

In the brief conclusion, Wengst takes the peculiar step of using Heb 11:23–28 and 13:12–14 as centering texts for the whole New Testament witness. He concludes that Jesus followed Moses in identifying with the oppressed and went outside the gate to bear the abuse one must endure. This becomes the basis for Wengst’s challenge that Christians today should “go out from the fortress of a policy of security which is already fatal” (p. 143).

The conclusion is followed by several helpful resources including a chronological table and a glossary of the various ancient

non-Christian authors cited in the book. Sources for original texts are identified and modern secondary literature is listed in an eleven-page bibliography. The book also includes a table of abbreviations and several indexes of references. The 62 pages of end notes are striking. They direct the reader to a treasure trove of discussion and evidence from literary, inscriptional, and numismatic sources.

Wengst follows good hermeneutical theory in explicitly rejecting a supposed position of “objectivity” and declaring his personal interest in the issues at hand. Nevertheless, it is not clear how he hopes to convince readers of his argument if they are not predisposed to accept it. This difficulty is exacerbated by a methodological foible: After masterfully demonstrating the wide range of evaluations of Roman rule found both in Christian and non-Christian writers of antiquity (and the consequent impossibility of talking about something such as *the* New Testament view), Wengst still attempts to erect a singular conclusion for the modern reader.

Wengst’s work will prove particularly useful as a secondary resource in graduate-level classes on the environment of the earliest church. It will also advance the discussion in church history, ethics, peace studies, and classics. Undergraduate students, pastors, and laity will find the book challenging, but accessible.

To paraphrase Wengst’s own argument, there is a variety of ways for scholars to assess the *Pax Romana*. This book offers one distinctive approach. Its value resides in the courage to present a voice that has often been ignored and deserves finally to be heard. The vigor of Wengst’s scholarship assures that it will be heard. But that does not make it the only voice.

—RAYMOND H. REIMER

The Flowering of Old Testament Theology: A Reader in Twentieth-Century Old Testament Theology, 1930–1990. Edited by Ben C. Ollenburger, Elmer A. Martens, and Gerhard F. Hasel. Eisenbrauns, 1992, 547 pages.

Students of Old Testament theology have a difficult choice to make. When they have access to the primary materials, the

number of “important” theologies is countless, which leads to the danger of not seeing the forest for the trees. On the other hand, when they have access to overviews of the development of the discipline, they lose the chance to interact with individual proposals and miss the trees for the forest.

The task of integrating the trees with the forest has been eased recently through the publication of *The Flowering of Old Testament Theology*. The editors of this volume have set themselves a two-fold task: “to orient the student” to the discipline and “to whet the student’s appetite to consult the primary source” (p. ix). This volume does an excellent job of meeting both goals while filling a unique and needed place in the discipline.

The book contains three sections. Part I sets the context for Old Testament theology in the 20th century. Part II shows the diversity in the conversation. Part III suggests directions for the movement of Old Testament theology into the 21st century. Each section begins with an introductory article by one of the editors, designed to orient the reader to the question being addressed and to provide a broad background for the primary works that follow. Representative texts are then reprinted from various authors who have discussed Old Testament theology since 1930. Accompanying each text is a brief sketch of the author’s contribution, location in the discussion, academic career, and a brief bibliography of the author’s pertinent works. The volume concludes with an appendix containing a reprint of Gabler’s seminal 1787 inaugural address at Altdorf and helpful indices for cross-referencing the various readings.

In Part I a developmental sketch of the growth of Old Testament theology from the time of Gabler until the 1930s provides a sharp and succinct context for the sampling of 20th century Old Testament theologians that follows. The remainder of the first section contains two classic articles: Otto Eissfeldt’s “Israelitisch-jüdische Religionsgeschichte und Alttestamentliche Theologie” (1926) and Walther Eichrodt’s “Hat die Alttestamentliche Theologie noch selbständige Bedeutung innerhalb der Alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft” (1929). These essays are

reprinted together here for the first time in English. One of the major pluses of this volume is the presence of these two articles together and in translation.

The largest section of the book (Part II) treats the work of fourteen representative scholars from 1930 to 1990. The pieces in Part II represent a wide variety of scholars who have participated in the discussion from von Rad to Kaiser to Childs. Although this section's introductory article sketches the major themes in the exchange of ideas that follow, it lacks a clear connection to the material that precedes it in Part I. For example, the discussion of history's significance for Old Testament theology (pp. 50–52) does not refer to the central nature of this concern for Eissfeldt and Eichrodt. A clearer connection would help the student orient the fourteen excerpts that follow in a more direct manner to the material in Part I (the history of the discipline).

The method of presentation is both helpful and frustrating. It is helpful in that the reader is introduced to both a methodological excerpt and a piece that shows that methodology in action. On the other hand, it is frustrating that, due to space limitations, the excerpts average only twenty pages. Nevertheless, this frustration does serve to “whet the appetite” of the reader.

In Part III, we meet scholars whom the editors feel will influence the conversation as it moves forward into the 21st century. Again, a helpful introductory article points to many of the continuing trends and movements in Old Testament theology. While no one would disagree that the five scholars' work in this section will influence Old Testament theology's progression toward the 21st century, one wonders how the editors decided which five authors to include. For example, the issues raised by Childs' canonical approach and Hanson's focus on community (both included in Part II) would also seem to be influential in the discussion for years to come. While this is a matter of choice, the editors could have been clearer about their decision-making process.

More important, however, is the editors' decision to include only North American and European scholarship in the volume, especially since this section points toward the future. Although

they do explain that cost and space limitations have necessitated this decision, the lack of liberation or two-thirds' world perspectives on Old Testament theology is a major weakness. These voices are becoming more and more prevalent in the guild as Old Testament theology assumes a global perspective.

Despite this limitation, *The Flowering of Old Testament Theology* is an excellent resource for the scholar and will be a wonderful teaching tool that both teacher and student will appreciate. Although more comprehensive sketches of the discipline's development are available (Hasel, Reventlow, Hayes and Prussner, Kraus), these efforts do not allow the reader as much direct contact with the primary material in the discussion. Although the serious student needs more intensive contact with the primary sources, the collection of such a variety of primary materials in one place provides the student with opportunities to see and compare the trees in the forest without the expensive initial outlay required to purchase all comparable primary materials.

The editors of this volume have achieved their twin goals of orienting the student and whetting the student's appetite for more interaction with the primary sources. Used with complete primary works and comprehensive sketches such as those mentioned above, *The Flowering of Old Testament Theology* will be an invaluable tool. I highly recommend it for both the teacher and student of Old Testament theology.

—THOMAS W. WALKER

To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism. By Theodore Dwight Bozeman. University of North Carolina Press, 1988, 413 pages.

Theodore Dwight Bozeman's *To Live Ancient Lives* is a clearly argued and thoroughly annotated rethinking of modern Puritan studies. One of its great strengths is the thoroughness of the author's knowledge of his field, both in its primary sources and in the secondary literature—no small task in an area as broadly studied as the New England Puritans.

Bozeman builds his case on a broad spectrum of primary materials, beginning with the documents of the English controversies between Puritans and the Anglican mainstream in the sixteenth century. He goes on to examine a multitude of materials from such varied genres as sermons, biblical commentaries, theological treatises, personal memoirs, letters, collections of family papers, and official community records extending through the seventeenth century. The sixteen-page bibliography of primary sources, which is followed by a seventeen-page listing of secondary literature, indicates the magnitude of the literature with which the author is dealing. This breadth and diversity, along with the thoroughness of Bozeman's discussion of the positions with which he disagrees, makes the book a helpful introduction to the field of Puritan studies as well as a new and substantial contribution to some of the important debates in the field.

The main argument of the book is that the Puritans in England and New England were focused neither on the future and progress toward it nor on bringing a millennial age. Instead, they were concerned with regaining a lost pristine past. They saw the Bible as the story of a primordial age, an age of holy drama with heroes of mythic proportion. The Puritans viewed the biblical age as the model for all future Christian life. Thus the Bible provided their reforming agenda at every level, from worship to civil law.

Bozeman presents this reading of the Puritans' purposes as a major rethinking of recent scholarship. He questions the methodology of those who study the Puritans in an effort to find the roots of the phenomena of contemporary society. Instead, he strives to find the intentions of the New England settlers from their own writings. In contrast to those who see the roots of the ideal of social progress in Puritanism, he argues that the Puritans consistently sought to return to a truly ancient, biblical, and "pure" age. They abhorred efforts at a future-oriented "progress." This backward perspective is confirmed by the second generation of colonists who idealized the efforts of the first immigrants as another primordium or pure mythic age to be emulated.

Bozeman also disagrees with the viewpoint of Perry Miller and others that the Puritans saw themselves fulfilling an eschatological task in building their biblical society in America. Bozeman's disagreement with Miller is so important to his agenda as to merit a whole chapter, with a section entitled, "Perry Miller's 'Errand into the Wilderness' and What Historians Have Made of It." Bozeman examines the intentions of the leaders and early settlers of the Great Migration of the 1630s and finds that they are not eschatological. Rather, they emphasize pragmatic concerns and the biblical themes of covenant and exile. He later emphasizes that millennial fervor did not strike until the 1640s. Thus, millennialism was not the goal of the Great Migration of the 1630s. Eschatology involves a consciousness of the future which, as Bozeman points out in detail, does not fit the Puritan mind set.

Bozeman focuses on the identity and ideology of Puritanism as perceived by the Puritans themselves. He concentrates on the primary intent of the authors of his sources rather than on the actual effect of the documents on the community or the movement. Thus important questions are pushed aside or not asked. In the case of the alleged modernizing tendencies of Puritanism, it is worth debating whether the movement had the *effect* of bringing changes to society which might be considered "modern," despite the intentional primitivism of the Puritans.

When the primary sources contain eschatological language, Bozeman passes off the references as rhetorical flourishes. However, one cannot deny the presence of eschatology in the texts. This raises the important question of the function of such rhetoric within the ideology and culture of the Puritans. The older view that the Puritans saw themselves fulfilling an eschatological role can still fit quite well within Bozeman's thesis. One does not have to look far in scripture to find apocalyptic visions and eschatological language. If, as Bozeman has cogently argued, the Puritans were bent on seeing themselves within the biblical drama, one does not have to stretch one's imagination to think of how they might see themselves in the final act as well as in the rest of the play.

These criticisms by no means detract from the value of this work. *To Live Ancient Lives* is well-researched and clearly argued. It is lively, enjoyable reading and an important contribution to the field.

—GARY NEAL HANSEN

God's People in the Ivory Tower: Religion in the Early American University. By Robert S. Shepard. Chicago Studies in the History of American Religion, no. 20. Brooklyn: Carlson, 1991, 174 pages.

Robert S. Shepard examines the emergence and demise of *Religionswissenschaft* during a revolutionary period in American higher education, 1875–1930. After enjoying a meteoric rise as a discipline in this period, why did it experience a decline during the 1930s? The traditional answer points to the collapse of Protestant liberalism and the corresponding rise of Protestant Neo-Orthodoxy with its criticisms of the scientific and historical approach to the study of religion. Shepard moves beyond this monocausal explanation with his in-depth history of *Religionswissenschaft* in this period.

Within this time frame, Shepard explains, the term *Religionswissenschaft* designated either comparative religion or the history of religions, rather than the modern hermeneutical orientation to the study of religion as popularized, for example, by Mircea Eliade. Like many scholarly disciplines, the “scientific, critical, historical, and comparative” method of studying the world’s religions originated in Europe and was imported to America. Shepard examines the rise of *Religionswissenschaft* at six major American universities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Boston University, Cornell University, New York University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Chicago, and Harvard University. With impressive detail, he surveys the particular development of the discipline in each institution.

These institutions were among the first American universities to employ the new scientific approach to the study of religion. However, at Boston, Cornell, and New York universities, *Reli-*

gionswissenschaft failed to live up to its billing. Professors were basically amateurs teaching elective courses to students preparing for the ministry. *Religionswissenschaft*, moreover, carried with it an apologetical predisposition of superiority over Christianity. This approach was compatible not only with the largely (Protestant) Christian ethos of these nonsectarian universities, but also with the ministry or missionary career plans of the students. Only at the University of Pennsylvania did *Religionswissenschaft* lack this Christian apologetical orientation.

In all four universities, *Religionswissenschaft* was a short-lived academic experience in the period under consideration. Shepard attributes its demise to its elective status within the curriculum, to meager graduate programs, and to the failure to find suitable successors to the founding professors. The fate of *Religionswissenschaft* at these four institutions illustrates the tenuous history of the discipline.

At Harvard and Chicago, however, *Religionswissenschaft* experienced a somewhat different fate. Harvard's President Charles W. Eliot and Chicago's William Rainey Harper were the leading reformers of American higher education in their day. Eliot constructed a major research institution out of an antebellum college. Harper created a major university *ex nihilo*. Both upheld the scientific ideals of the day. Both were subsequently criticized for creating "secular" universities. Ironically, however, both gave theology a place in the modern university by supporting the development of *Religionswissenschaft* in their divinity schools. Eliot and Harper saw *Religionswissenschaft* as a way of professionalizing the ministry while making the study of religion academically respectable. Harvard and Chicago together boasted the leading lights in the scientific study of religion: James Freeman Clarke, Charles Carroll Everett, Crawford Howell Toy, George Foot Moore, George Stephen Goodspeed, George Burman Foster, and Albert Eustace Haydon.

However, all was not well in *Religionswissenschaftland*. These leading lights cast little illumination on the field with their limited publications. Few graduate students darkened their semi-

nar rooms. They lacked a coterie of faculty members with a common identity. Consequently, the professionalization of the discipline did not materialize in this period. Most importantly, *Religionswissenschaft* was included within the divinity school curriculum as a way of professionalizing the ministry. This academic context and justification for the scientific study of religion ultimately relegated the blossoming discipline to a “secondary and ancillary role” (p. 107). These developments coincided with the demise of liberal Protestantism and the criticisms of Neo-Orthodoxy. As a result, *Religionswissenschaft* declined as an academic discipline in the 1930s. Only after World War II was *Religionswissenschaft* resurrected with a more academic and humanistically based identity.

Shepard makes a compelling argument for *Religionswissenschaft*’s rise and fall during the critical period in American higher education. Shepard examines *Religionswissenschaft* on both the micro and macro analytical levels. Shepard pays particular attention to the role of key professors and the specific place the discipline enjoyed within the curricula, departments, and degree programs of each university. He also probes the relationship of the scientific study of religion within the broader context of the new philosophies of higher education that emerged in this period.

Because he examines the intellectual developments surrounding the growth of *Religionswissenschaft* within its institutional and social context, Shepard makes a valuable contribution to several areas of historical research. His work will interest not only modern-day practitioners of *Religionswissenschaft*, but also historians of higher education and historians of American religion.

—P. C. KEMENY

The Collapse of the Weimar Republic: Political Economy and Crisis. 2d ed. By David Abraham. Holmes and Meier, 1986, 352 pages.

The Confessing Church, Conservative Elites, and the Nazi State. By Shelley Baranowski. Edwin Mellen Press, 1986, 185 pages.

An historian, such as David Abraham, who writes a book so controversial that he or she is ostracized from the profession is

likely to become a *cause célèbre*, but the book may not merit review in a theological journal. However, it is even more surprising when a historian, such as Shelley Baranowski, writes a provocative book on the church in history which received only four reviews in six years.

Each of the above books is significant methodologically for the way in which it challenges the positivist, individualist, and intentionalist methodologies that govern the work of (church) historians and the near hagiography of the Protestant churches in what has been called the German Church Struggle (1933–1945).

David Abraham's *Collapse of the Weimar Republic* occasioned a massive and strident rejection upon its first release in 1981 and resulted in his dismissal from the historical profession. In the second edition, Abraham corrects the faulty and misdocumentation of the first edition which led to charges of academic fakery, fraud, and invention. Its important ideological focus remains, however. *Collapse* argues that the victory of National Socialism in Germany in 1933 was a result of the support given by the economic elites (industrialists and leaders of business).

Similarly, Shelley Baranowski's *The Confessing Church, Conservative Elites, and the Nazi State* argues that another segment of the middle and upper class (the conservative elites), the Protestant churches, both benefited from and supported the rule of National Socialism. This focus on the role of class in history suggests that National Socialism was the beneficiary and final expression of the social and political forces of the *ancien régime* which persisted in Europe until the end of World War II. As members of the same elite class, both business and the churches are held to account in these books.

Drawing upon the structural analysis of A. Gramsci and E. Kehr, Abraham treats the collapse of Weimar as the result of conflict between labor and capital fractions. In his view, the successful labor and trade unions backed the forces of capital into a corner to such a degree that compromise was impossible. With the onset of depression in 1928, heavy industry became increasingly anti-

labor, thus turning an economic crisis into a political one. The governments from 1930–1932 under Brüning, von Papen, and Schleicher were unable to put together a coalition because they either did not have the necessary political prescription or because they did not have mass support.

In the midst of this power vacuum came the National Socialists, who had captured both the middle class vote and heavy industry with their appealing political agenda and economic policies. The conservative elites (economic and ecclesiastical) welcomed Hitler because he offered the only alternative to Weimar's social liberalism and moral decadence. The argument here is not that big business created Hitler, but that he was the unintended consequence of the economic and political forces at work in Weimar's society.

Baranowski's aim is to show that the Protestant clergy and laity belonged to the same hegemonic class and therefore shared the same concerns and had the same needs as the rest of the conservative elites and upper middle classes. To illustrate this, she points out that of the 82 lay delegates to the Church Assembly in Nuremberg in 1930, 15 were large estate owners, 20 were jurists, 32 were high ranking state officials, and a full one-quarter of the delegates were from the nobility (pp. 19–20). Among the Protestant clergy, one poll found that 80% had conservative leanings; not for nothing was it said that "the church is politically neutral but votes German national" (p. 21).

Pivotal for Baranowski's work is the conviction that most Protestants were sympathetic to the general aims of National Socialism. They limited dissent toward the regime to specifically ecclesiastical concerns. Even there, however, the Protestants—especially those who formed the Confessing Church—were opposed only to state interference, not to the state itself, and certainly not to state subsidy (pp. 53, 59–60, 77).

In other matters the Protestant churches were frequently in harmony with National Socialist policies. Protestants, for example, overwhelmingly supported withdrawal from the League

of Nations, the remilitarization of the Rhineland, and the annexation of Austria. When Germany went to war with Poland, not only did many Protestant clergy volunteer for military service; so did several clergy who had been imprisoned by the Nazis, including Martin Niemöller (pp. 49, 86). On other issues, such as the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 and Jewish policy as a whole, the churches were either completely mute or hoped that the legal restrictions on Jews would be moderate and tolerable (pp. 83–85). At most, one can say that a few Protestants rejected “Nazi means but few [rejected] Nazi ends” (p. 98).

The crux of Baranowski’s critique is that such adherence to the regime renders the term *resistance* inapplicable to the Protestant churches. More specifically, opposition by church leaders to Hitler himself never included opposition to National Socialism. In eliminating Hitler they would only have brought forward another leader who embraced the ideals of the conservative elites. In a word, there was no resistance to National Socialism precisely because it was not revolutionary. The churches, then, were counterrevolutionary (pp. 94–128).

It is true that the churches were predominately from the middle and upper classes and their leadership had nothing even resembling a socialist. Nevertheless, it requires a large leap to assume that resistance requires revolution. This is based on the assumption that any antithesis will result in a better synthesis, but this is not necessarily the case. That a synthesis will be different does not make it an improvement.

Abraham and Baranowski have provided jarring readings and critiques of one particular period of (church) history. One need not agree with the assessment that all conservative elites were counterrevolutionary to agree that their class analyses have successfully challenged both the standard methodology and many of the standard conclusions regarding the Weimar and National Socialist periods in Germany by (church) historians.

—WESLEY W. SMITH

Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination. By Garrett Green. Harper & Row, 1989, 179 pages.

Interest in the religious “imagination” is not totally new these days, as is evidenced by the publication of David Tracy’s *Analogical Imagination* and Gordon Kaufman’s *Theological Imagination*. As interest in “imagination” grows, however, there seems to be a concurrent decline in consideration of “revelation.” For example, Kaufman argues that “theology is an activity of human imaginative construction” and rejects a method based on the revelation of God (*Theological Imagination*, p. 138). While Kaufman uses imagination as a means to devalue revelation, Garrett Green tries to recover “revelation” in terms of imagination.

Green’s basic thesis is that the point of contact (the *Anknüpfungspunkt*) between divine revelation and human experience is located in the imagination. In developing his thesis, Green locates himself at the impasse between “natural theology” and “positivism of revelation” (cf. the debate in the 1930s between Brunner and Barth). Green links Barth’s rejection of the *Anknüpfungspunkt* with anti-foundationalism. According to Green, Barth’s refusal to undergird theology with a philosophical foundation reveals his conviction that all proposals to “ground” knowledge epistemologically are based on untenable assumptions about the nature of knowledge and should therefore be rejected (p. 36).

Though Green sympathizes with Barth’s anti-foundational argument, he does not want theology to fall into an intellectual ghetto. He thus admits the legitimacy of Brunner’s insistence on the *Anknüpfungspunkt*. Theology cannot avoid saying how divine revelation becomes humanly effective. Trying to resolve this dilemma of “natural theology” or “positivism of revelation,” Green argues that “conceiving the point of contact between divine revelation and human experience in terms of imagination allows us to acknowledge the priority of grace in the divine-human relationship while . . . allowing its dynamics to be described in analytical and comparative terms as a human religious phenomenon” (p. 4).

Since the Enlightenment, there has been a sharp dichotomy between science and religion. This dichotomy has been based

upon the conviction that science deals with empirical facts while religion relates to the inner world of feelings. Green rejects this restrictive view of science and religion along with the corresponding idea that anything requiring imagination must be imaginary. Drawing on the insights of the new philosophy of science and of Gestalt psychology, Green shows that imagination is as important to science as it is to religion. Imagination plays a fundamental role, Green argues, in the origin and development of the natural sciences. Imagination is not only related with the subjective side of human experience; it is also essential to the objective and factual investigation of natural phenomena (p. 44). Green speaks of significant parallels between the methods of science and religion in that both depend on the paradigmatic imagination. Hence, the modern dichotomy between these two disciplines proves false.

Green regards imagination as “the paradigmatic faculty, the ability of human beings to recognize in accessible exemplars the constitutive organizing patterns of other, less accessible and more complex objects of cognition” (p. 66). Imagination makes accessible what would otherwise be unavailable. Green regards imagination as the taking over of paradigms to explore the patterns of the larger world. Green focuses more on the receptive side than on the constructive side of imagination. “The religious imagination does not image God [i.e., construct some kind of picture of God] but imagines God [i.e., thinks of God according to a paradigm]” (p. 93).

On the basis of “paradigmatic imagination,” Green examines in the second half of his book the theological implications for the Christian notions of revelation, scripture, and theology. “Revelation is an act of imagination; scripture is a work of imagination; and theology is an interpretation of imagination” (p. 106). For Green, Christian faith as “faithful imagination” is living in conformity to the biblical vision. The task of theology is to interpret the metaphorical language of religious life and faith grounded in the Bible, its classic or paradigmatic text (p. 134).

Hence, for Green, theology is better described as hermeneutical rather than as metaphorical. Thus, Green criticizes Sallie

McFague's attempt to define theology in terms of metaphor. Green understands metaphor as an authentic use of language which makes accessible something that would otherwise lie beyond our linguistic grasp. The problem with McFague's "metaphorical theology," argues Green, lies in its misunderstanding of the relation of religious language and experience. According to Green, religious language is not the expression of prelinguistic religious experience, but arises out of commitment to specific religious paradigms. The "given" is not a foundational experience, but a religious paradigm. The mistake of metaphorical theology, Green argues, is that it makes experience the criterion for revelation, rather than the other way around.

When Green makes use of Thomas Kuhn's notion of paradigms, he knows his proposal could well be viewed as fideistic. How can one adjudicate the truth claims of each paradigm? Is Green demonstrating here a kind of "Wittgensteinian fideism," immunizing theological assertions by treating these assertions as aspects of self-referential language games? Green argues that his proposal does not fall into fideism by assuming that choices among the language games are arbitrary. Though Green defends his position by contending that paradigm changes are not arbitrary, his argument is quite limited.

The issue of fideism is closely related to the problem of rationality in theology. Here rationality should no longer be understood exclusively in the positivistic sense of natural science. In theology, as in human sciences, rationality should be determined contextually. It is thus paradigm-specific. As Green says, it would be naive to expect that one could adduce neutral criteria by which to establish the reasonableness of a religious conviction (p. 79). And yet are there not criteria of rationality which are valid inter-contextually or inter-paradigmatically? How can Green show his biblically informed "faithful imagination" to be a credible way of understanding?

A second question is related to Green's understanding of imagination. Unlike Kaufman, who treats the imagination primarily as constructive, Green stresses its receptive dimension. Green treats

the imagination almost exclusively as a power that takes over paradigms from other sources. Is imagination simply a receptive power? Is there no constructing and reconstructing in the operation of imagination?

A third question concerns the relationship between religious language and experience. Marshalling George Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic insights, Green rightly criticizes several attempts to reduce religion to prelinguistic experience. But experience is not wholly shaped by our culture and language. Sometimes new experiences surprise us by contradicting our expectations. Might it not be healthier, then, to adopt a more dialectical understanding of the interaction between language and experience? Should there not be room for revelation outside of paradigmatic imagination?

These questions do not detract from the importance of this book. The issues Green's book raises are timely and thought-provoking. No one in theology, no one interested in the ways of thinking about God, can afford to ignore Green's *Imagining God*.

—KYOUNG CHUL JANG

Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace. By Glen H. Stassen. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992, 288 pages.

Christian ethical thought on war and peacemaking is usually classified according to the "Crusade," "just war," and "pacifist" traditions. Since the Crusade is seldom endorsed openly by modern Christian ethicists, discussions on these issues usually become a debate between just-war theorists and pacifists over whether Christians are ever permitted to use lethal violence or to fight in particular wars.

Glen Stassen, professor of Christian ethics at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, believes that debate to be important. However, when it becomes the focus of Christian ethical reflection on war and peace issues, it obscures the vital question of what Christians should be doing to make peace. In *Just Peacemaking*, Stassen contends that the war and peace focus of the Bible

does not center around the question of whether the people of God are permitted to kill in justified wars. Rather, the Bible calls God's people to be active in making *shalom* (peace with justice) as part of their identity as God's people.

In his search for an alternative to the debate between pacifists and nonpacifists over the use of violence, Stassen calls Christians from all traditions to a fresh examination of the biblical witness. *Just Peacemaking* is full of careful exegetical work on the New Testament. Stassen's exegesis is constantly informed by critical scholarship from across the theological spectrum. He also ventures many fresh insights, such as his suggestion that the Sermon on the Mount reflects a triadic structure, with the emphasis falling on the imperatives in the third part. Stassen moves easily from exegesis to hermeneutics, developing a multi-dimensional model of "just peacemaking," which he distills into seven steps.

With his model of peacemaking rooted firmly in his interpretation of the New Testament, Stassen attempts to communicate his peacemaking strategy to secularists and other non-Christians who do not share his presuppositions. Stassen maintains that public discourse in a pluralistic society requires an ethic rooted in the Christian faith and a language that can speak to those of different faiths or those of no faith. He draws on political science and the experience of the former East Germans in developing a six-step "just peacemaking theory" that corresponds remarkably to the seven-step biblical model developed by Stassen in his exegetical-hermeneutical work. (The element missing in the public model is prayer.)

Just Peacemaking does not remain at the level of exegesis or ethical theory. It illustrates the process of just peacemaking at work in such diverse efforts as the church-led nonviolent revolution in the former East Germany and the coordination of the peace movements in Europe and the United States that resulted in the INF treaty. It also examines the failure of all parties to take such steps in the recent Persian Gulf war.

Stassen links justice and peace closely, maintaining that the Bible does so as well. In one of several "narrative" chapters, he

describes the historical drama of the Christian roots of the concept of human rights and the importance of human rights for any form of peacemaking that includes justice. Stassen has been influenced by ethicists such as Stanley Hauerwas and James Wm. McClendon who emphasize the power of biblical narratives (or the Christian “master story”) to shape a peacemaking community. Unlike the narrativists and many others, however, Stassen does not contend that the concept of “human rights” is a nonbiblical idea that originated in the Enlightenment. With deft historical skill, he tells the story of the origin of the human rights concept in Free Church Calvinism in England and North America. The concept came to full fruition with Richard Overton, a Baptist and a Leveller, over half a century before the Enlightenment. Since, however, “human rights” has grounding in *reason* as well as in the Bible, Stassen argues that it works well for communicating biblical concerns for *shalom* in a pluralistic world.

In another narrative chapter, Stassen illustrates the centrality of human rights for just peacemaking with the work of the Children’s Defense Fund. Using the twelve-step recovery model developed by addiction recovery groups, Stassen shows how militarism is an addiction that requires a similar holistic method of recovery. In these and other ways, the book attempts to offer a fully orbéd method of peacemaking.

This is an excellent book. All Christians and others interested in peace with justice can profit from it. The influence of both Reinhold Niebuhr, Stassen’s teacher, and John Howard Yoder, his long-time friend, are quite evident in Stassen’s attempt to combine Yoder’s “biblical realism” with Niebuhr’s “political realism.”

Chapters on the ecological dimensions of peacemaking and on the peacemaking themes in Romans were unfortunately omitted by the publisher to limit the size of the book, which is poorer because of this decision. An investigation of the justice and peacemaking themes of the Old Testament would have strengthened the discussion of biblical perspectives. Furthermore, examples from the Two-Thirds world and its struggles for liberation are noticeably missing in Stassen’s discussion of the political dimensions of peacemaking.

However, these criticisms should not detract greatly from the value of the work as a whole. Although Stassen is in constant dialogue with the secondary scholarly literature, this discussion is relegated largely to the footnotes, thus enabling a variety of groups to use the book. This is a highly readable book that can readily be studied by church and other peacemaker groups and by ethics classes on the college or seminary level.

—MICHAEL L. WESTMORELAND-WHITE

THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Hospitable Canon: Essays on Literary Play, Scholarly Choice, and Popular Pressures. Ed. by Virgil Nemoianu and Robert Royal. Vol. 4 of *Cultura Ludens: Imitation and Play in Western Culture*. Giuseppe Mazzotta and Mihai Spariosu, Series Editors. John Benjamins Pub. Co., 1991, 269 pages.

Canon debates are not new. Those concerning Christian and Jewish scriptures are well-known. The newest round of debates are not over sacred texts, but over literature. Nevertheless, many of the issues involved are commonplace in biblical studies. Are there aesthetic criteria by which literature can be called great? Are canon debates disguised ideological debates? Is “canon” a meaningful category? All these questions have theological counterparts.

The Hospitable Canon is a diverse collection of essays unevenly supporting literary canons. The collection is both guided by and a defense of the assumption that “despite the interdependencies of cultural and intellectual matters with all other workings of society, . . . cultural and intellectual pursuits have an integrity, autonomy, and sphere of their own” (p. vii). As a whole, the collection holds that the free play of the intellect, present in unique ways in the “great works” of literary canons, is both irreducible to political or economic factors and a dimension indispensable to the formation of cultural health. Contributions range widely from examples of curricular practices to methodological discussions about the nature and function of canons.

The reader may be nonplused by the collection’s uneven thematic range. Contributors enter the literary canon discussion at

such different levels and with such disparate agendas that it is difficult to relate them to the book's title or to each other. For that reason the reader would benefit by beginning with Nemoianu's article, "Literary Canons and Social Value Options" (pp. 215–247). Nemoianu provides substantive and methodological clarity to the malaise of canon discussions (as well as to the book) by discerning three levels of current debate. They are the "symbolic battle" in which the literary is "merely a vehicle" for political interests; the curricular level, which entails an ongoing negotiation between the cultural idiosyncracies and canonical domain; and the level of the canons themselves.

Since the suitability of literary canons for cultural formation is being defended (against a variety of critiques), one goal of several authors is to look for criteria present in canonical works that answer their critics. Nemoianu, for instance, locates factors such as "majority preference over time," "multiplicity of attached meanings," "lively interaction with different value fields," the "ability to establish aesthetic durability," and mediation between "curricular and commercial works" to answer those who hold that canons are used by elites to perpetuate self-interest (pp. 220–221).

Often these criteria discussions are framed around specific concerns. Christopher Clausen ("Canon, Theme, and Code," pp. 199–213) asks, "What intrinsic qualities—aesthetic, intellectual, moral, or otherwise—help a literary work outlast the historical and cultural circumstances in which it was created?" (p. 201). He finds a common field in "themes" well-presented in great literature that voices timeless concerns, such as love and death.

In "Perplexing Lessons: Is There a Core Tradition in the Humanities?" (pp. 85–95), Roger Shaddock scans the core tradition (a term that seems to be parallel to "Great Books," or to "classics") to answer the question, "How can one teach in the humanities when there seem to be no overarching public standards?" What he finds is a "center" with a limited number of versions of human greatness (p. 90).

Robert Royal ("Creative Intuition, Great Books, and Freedom of Intellect," pp. 67–83) defends the "Great Books" tradition

against charges that education is an indoctrination in correct political views. Summoning arguments by Jacques Maritain, Royal finds a quasi-mystical poetic intuition “flooding from the pre-conscious” of such people as Homer and Einstein, which transcends ideology with a “greater human insight” (p. 74).

Of particular interest to students of theology is the quasi-religious dimension of “great literature.” In answering the question, “What makes great literature great?” many of the contributors venture into religious or boundary issues. Royal, for instance, finds that poetic intuition, generated in either the “soul,” the “pre-conscious,” or the “agent intellect,” is a “greatness of conception” or “some sort of light” that unites great minds. This religious dimension is equally present in Clausen’s archetypal “themes” which “have significance, even topical significance, within virtually any historical context” (p. 208).

Shattuck’s linkage of “masterworks” with the “deepest sense of humanity” makes literature a dialogue partner with religion. Nemoianu, who is careful to dissociate literature from religion, still recognizes its chaotic and unpredictable character. Only Charles Altieri (“Canons and Differences,” pp. 1–38), escapes a religious charge by positing canon as a dynamic historical literary grammar.

The assignation of religious function to literature is not new, as Pierre A. Walker states in “Arnold’s Legacy: Religious Rhetoric of Critics on the Literary Canon” (pp. 182–197). Matthew Arnold’s contention was that when scientific discoveries discredited religion, literature took its place (p. 182). This view is upheld, according to Walker, both by “the pervasiveness of religious rhetoric in modern criticism” (p. 182) and by a modern veneration of literature, exemplified by pro-canon critics Frank Kermode and Harold Bloom. Walker is not uncomfortable with this characterization, as long as “the literary canon is not ‘eternal’ and ‘immutable’” (p. 195). Even Marxist critic, Terry Eagleton, and feminist critic, Jane Tomkins, who acknowledge but disparage the aforementioned religious connection to literature, both offer far more zealously “religious” alternatives.

The desire by the editors to preserve the “autonomous integrity of the cultural sphere” and the “free play of the intellect” is respected. It is reductionistic to read literature only in terms of ideology or economics. But lines are not easily drawn between fields and calling for the immunity of literature from political or ideological critique is equally unfortunate, as has been shown by the abundance of religious and quasi-religious inferences in the text. The book offers a host of opportunities for interdisciplinary dialogue.

The articles hold readers’ attention for a variety of reasons. All deserve treatment, but space is prohibitive. However, the volume suffers from a lack of clear methodological rationale for the selection of articles and for their ordering. It would seem that in a collection aimed at “advancing a crucial cultural conversation” (p. vii) and “clarifying disagreements and defusing tensions” (p. vi), methodological clarity would be of first importance. It is unfortunate that the cost may prohibit purchase (\$60), for any thoughtful reader will find a wealth of well-reasoned interesting essays.

—WILLIAM JACOBSEN

A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals. By Don S. Browning. Fortress Press, 1991, 324 pages.

Don Browning’s latest book, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals*, extends and elaborates the insights of recent practical theology into the pragmatic and hermeneutical nature of all knowledge. Informed by the hermeneutical philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Browning sets forth an ambitious vision of practical theology as the generative and encompassing context for all theological disciplines. He builds on pragmatism’s claim that practical thinking is fundamental and that technical and theoretical thinking are abstractions from it.

Browning divides “fundamental practical theology” into descriptive, historic, systematic, and strategic theologies. These are “not just divisions of the formal theological encyclopedia,” but

are “movements of theological reflection in all practical religious activity” (p. 9). Common to all four movements of theological reflection are the five dimensions of practical moral reasoning (visional, obligational, tendency-need, environmental-social, and rule-role). Practical moral reasoning serves as a clarifying tool for critical reflection and correlation. Browning relies on theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and the thought of Louis Janssens to provide the Christian content of the five dimensions of moral reasoning.

Browning promises to make this “a genuinely practical book, and not just one about the theory of practical theology” (p. 12). He illustrates effectively the radical difference between the earlier *theory-to-practice* paradigm of practical theology (p. 7) and one that starts from an explicit description of the theologian’s or community’s social location and interests. He critiques congregational research in which sociologists and psychologists assume their own objectivity and neutrality. He then describes how his own social location and interests lead to constructive proposals. The book is a tapestry into which the stories of three actual churches are woven, along with Browning’s prescriptions for the form and sequence of a fundamental practical theology.

Browning maintains that practical reason and moral reason are not clearly distinguishable, since every exercise of reason in communities is a tradition-shaped process that is both moral and practical. In both religious and secular frameworks, the exercise of reason is moral in that it implies a vision of ultimacy. It is practical in that application “guides the interpretive process from the beginning, often in subtle, overlooked ways” (p. 39).

For Browning, the five dimensions of practical moral reasoning are not *a priori* structures in the mind, but verifiable ways of organizing experience. They represent five types of validity claims to which Christian communities must subject their chosen courses of action if they are to take part in “the discourse of a free society aimed at shaping the common good” (p. 71). Browning asserts that in both religious and secular contexts, practical reason always has an “overall dynamic,” “an outer envelope,” and an “inner core.”

The “overall dynamic” of practical reason is the reconstruction of experience. In times of crisis, a community evaluates the theories imbedded in its practices, critiques them, and formulates new ones. World views and concrete practices are reconstructed. The “outer envelope” of practical reason includes the tradition’s narratives and metaphors which form the context within which practical reason operates. With reference to Christian faith, the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus constitutes the vision that animates, informs, and provides the ontological context for practical reason (p. 11).

One of Browning’s more cogent points is that every use of practical reason—not only in religious context, but also in philosophy and the social sciences—has a narrative envelope, an implied vision. This is an elaboration of Tillich’s insight that all forms of human cultural expression evince an “ultimate concern.” The outer envelope of practical reason corresponds to the visional level, which defines the world view within which the inner core of practical reason works. The “inner core” of practical reason comprises a dynamic relationship between the obligational and tendency-need levels of Browning’s five dimensions. Hence, the central importance of moral reasoning to Browning’s theological system and its pragmatic cast.

Browning’s section on the debate between cultural-linguistic attempts to advance theology without apologetics and foundationalist attempts to assert metaphysical certainty is one of the strengths of this book. He argues for a practical moral reasoning that is not confined to its outer narrative envelope, but which reflects upon and generalizes about unmediated experience. On the “tendency-need” level, practical moral reason has access to a premoral good, which it brings into dialogue with the narratives and images of the visional level or with the outer envelope of practical moral reason in a community. Browning makes room for a dialogue between “brute” experience and “tradition-laden linguistic forms” as mediated by practical reason. Such a dialogue, he says, is capable of “kicking at edges of tradition” and taking “small but important steps outside it” (p. 180).

Browning's work is praise-worthy for its bold vision for a fundamental practical theology and for the descriptive and prescriptive power of the five dimensions that thread their way through it. However, it would not be fair to ignore its notable deficiencies. He claims that his correlation model is the revised mutually critical correlation of Tracy. However, it is actually closer to the Tillichian model, in which the human sciences provide questions and the Christian tradition provides answers. In treating the human sciences primarily under the rubric of descriptive theology, he subtly erodes their credibility as generators of meanings, strategies, and traditions. He passes up an obvious opportunity to illustrate how the human sciences can make a critical and constructive contribution in, for example, the recent dialogue between feminist psychology and Niebuhr's view of sin.

Browning believes that practical reason, in stepping outside tradition, can critique tradition. This profound insight has radical methodological implications. Yet in the crucial areas of historical and systematic theology, Browning leaves them largely unexplored. This accentuates the very distance between theory and practice he wants to eliminate.

What happens when we go so far as to allow the "brute" experience of two-thirds world, black, and feminist theologies to critique the "tradition-laden linguistic forms" of the philosophers and theologians (Niebuhr, Gadamer, and Janssens) Browning uses as trail guides? For example, his critique of Gadamer does not touch on the feminist critique that Gadamer's fusion of horizons assumes a harmony between experience and tradition. Dialogue with Rebecca Chopp's recent critique of correlation is conspicuously absent, as is acknowledgment of recent feminist critique of Niebuhr's portrayal of sin as pride. As a result, Browning does not draw out the full potential of his practical reasoning for clarifying the oppressiveness of classic Christian interpretations of biblical texts for women, minorities, and members of the two-thirds world.

A Fundamental Practical Theology expands recent practical theological reflection into a bold prescription for theology and theological studies. The book's argument resembles a winding route

highlighted on a road map. As Browning acknowledges, it is a “long and complex” trip. At times, the reader may wonder why he or she is directed to one theologian rather than to another and why so many turns and twists are necessary to reach the destination. But even in the twists and turns, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* remains bold and concrete.

—ALYCE M. MCKENZIE

A Teachable Spirit: Recovering the Teaching Office in the Church. By Richard Robert Osmer. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990, 298 pages.

Koinonia readers will benefit from Richard Osmer’s constructive treatise, *A Teachable Spirit*. Through it, Osmer sounds an ecclesiastical roll call to students of the classical theological disciplines by his insistence that “the single most important task before the mainline Protestant churches today is the reestablishment of a vital teaching ministry at every level of church life” (p. x).

Osmer develops his thesis in three major sections. In part one, Osmer documents the “demise” of the mainline denominations by pointing to (1) declining membership, (2) increasing moral irrelevance in the broader culture, and (3) the ambiguous relationship of mainline denominations to traditional American civic faith (p. 6f). These are the results of the clash between the church and a modern technological, pluralistic culture (p. 29). Befuddled in this struggle, the church has either accommodated itself to modernization in the form of rampant individualism or has uncritically reaffirmed traditional forms of religious and institutional authority. Both responses distort the living Christian tradition.

How is the church to survive if its message has become reductionistic and simplistic in an increasingly multicultural world? Osmer proposes the *rediscovery* and *recovery* of a third way—an authoritative teaching office in the church. He considers the tasks of this office to be (1) to determine the normative beliefs and practices of the church, (2) to reinterpret these beliefs and

practices in new contexts, and (3) to determine educational institutions, processes, and curricula by which these beliefs and practices can be handed on and appropriated in the lives of individual Christians (pp. 15, 46, 180). This teaching authority must be persuasive, rather than authoritarian. It must persuasively inculcate piety, where piety is comprised of a person's attitudes and dispositions (p. 49).

In the second part of the book, Osmer *rediscovers* the teaching office by returning to the thought of Martin Luther and John Calvin. He presents Luther, and more particularly Calvin, as the paragons of the teaching office. The renewed authority accorded the scriptures in the Reformation demanded a viable pedagogical vehicle. Calvin responded with pedagogical structures and offices which provided the laity a direct but accurate access to the scriptures. On the one hand, a learned and skilled clergy was required. On the other hand, the laity were encouraged to develop a "teachable spirit." Yet, since the authority of the clergy derives from the authority of scripture—and sometimes proves fallible in view of the scriptures—the "teachable spirit" is not marked by uncritical passivity. Instead, laity and clergy together must test the pedagogical fidelity to the scriptures of the teaching office.

The third and final section of the book proposes a *recovery* of the classical teaching office, newly formulated in light of modern culture. In Osmer's design, the office itself will be shared and exercised on the three structural levels in the mainline church: seminary faculties, denominational agencies, and individual congregations. These are the three major "centers" in which to accomplish the threefold mandate of the teaching office.

The novelty in Osmer's proposal does not lie in his proposed structure. Rather, it lies in his correct insistence that a fundamental task of *each* level is the education of the church *in cooperation with the other levels*. Unfortunately, Osmer does not work out in detail exactly how the major centers would efficiently communicate in order to solidify their efforts. While this may not be an insurmountable criticism of a well-sustained thesis, its absence will most likely complicate the recovery of the teaching office.

Perhaps the most important contribution of Osmer's proposal is the recovery of the Reformed insistence that all good theology is essentially practical. By tracing the roots of the modern discipline of practical theology to the separation of moral theology from speculative theology, Osmer suggests that practical theological reflection essentially concerns Christian praxis *within* Christian praxis. It comprises five activities: identification (what is happening), evaluative description (why is it happening), determination of theological and moral issues at stake, determination of possible courses of action, and finally, practical theological reflection throughout the entire course of action (p. 167).

The teaching office supports these endeavors by the transmission of the normative beliefs and practices of the church, by the reinterpretation of these beliefs and practices in new situations, and through the establishment of institutions and structures that allow these activities to take place. Osmer follows this proposal with specific suggestions for each level of the mainline church.

In a final chapter, Osmer uses the faith development theory of James Fowler to suggest possible ways the teaching office could facilitate practical theological reflection throughout an individual's life. Here again, Osmer makes many constructive proposals and integrates theory with praxis.

A Teachable Spirit may remind many of the more scathing and sardonic treatise of Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*. In his own way, Osmer has uncovered an ecclesiastical nihilism and argues for a recovery of authority of the subject matter over the opinion of the student. At the same time, *A Teachable Spirit* presents an articulate and sustained proposal desperately needed today.

Though several places bear scrutiny and disagreement (e.g., note the unconventional definition of "practical theology" and the uncritical use of Fowler's paradigm), Osmer has assembled and synthesized an impressive amount of material supporting his program. Despite the need for further revision, this program will prove to be of vital importance to the postmodern congregation.

The mainline church and its supporting agencies should be grateful for a contribution of this caliber.

—SCOTT R. A. STARBUCK

The Knight's Move: The Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science. By James E. Loder and W. Jim Neidhardt. Helmers and Howard Press, 1992, 368 pages.

Most scholars recognize that the promise of epistemological certainty through either positivist scientific rationality or theological foundationalism no longer belongs to us. In the postmodern era, brave new approaches to knowing are now being sought “beyond objectivism and relativism” to heal, unite, and humanize the planet. On the positive side, this epistemological humility opens up exciting new possibilities for dialogue between science and theology. However, some worry that the ideologies of pluralism will render the church impotent to live out and defend the truth about the world, ourselves, and God. Perhaps epistemological humility needs to be tempered by apologetic boldness. But whence comes that boldness?

Both the humility of postmodern consciousness and the boldness born of Christian conviction distinguish James E. Loder and Jim Neidhardt's daring treatise on epistemology, *The Knight's Move*. Loder, a theologian from Princeton Theological Seminary, and Neidhardt, a physicist from the New Jersey Institute of Technology, reexamine both postmodern scientific understanding and the Protestant Christian tradition through a Kierkegaardian lens. Their goal is to formulate an alternative epistemological methodology for both theology and science, rooted in the neglected concept of “human nature as spirit.”

The authors develop a generic model of epistemology called “the strange loop,” whose geometric referent is the Mobius band. It describes a pattern of knowing which they believe is authentic both to scientific discovery and to religious experience when human nature is understood as spirit. They argue that human beings are “wired” to discern the tacit meanings hidden within

subatomic, psychosomatic, cosmic, and transcendent realms. When encountering the limits of normal human rationality in these so-called counterintuitive realms, the human spirit constructs new and more expansive frames of reference through which the knower relates to the object known.

This “strange loop” pattern of the spirit’s self-relational consciousness is neither linear nor incremental, but *Gestalt*-like in structure. Consciousness governed by the spirit breaks the ordinary sequence of both observer-detached (empiricist) and observer-determined (idealist) ways of knowing and asserts the unexpected “knight’s move” of observer-involved rationality. When the “thinker becomes an essential and irreducible part of the knowledge of a situation,” rigorous questions of meaning, value, and purpose become pertinent even in the “hard” sciences like physics. The authors conclude, therefore, that the present theology/science dialogue should take seriously the relational epistemology of the spirit, the “third realm of discourse” between foundationalism and pluralism.

To make their case for a relational epistemology, the authors develop “the strange loop” model in Section I (chapters 2–5) by pointing to the connections between D. Hofstadter’s work on self-relational intelligence in science and M. Polanyi’s postcritical epistemology called “personal knowledge.” Then Loder and Neidhardt seek to establish Kierkegaard as a seminal figure for the science/theology dialogue. They trace the subtle linkages between Kierkegaard’s relational logic of incarnation and Niel Bohr’s description of the “bi-polar relational unity” of subatomic reality known as the “complementarity of contradictories.” With this connection made, scientific method enlarges “to reconstruct the grounds of intelligibility in a frame of reference that is comprehensive enough to include the knower.”

In chapter five the authors work out in detail the Kierkegaardian version of relational epistemology in connection with human nature itself and with the Christology of Chalcedon. Striking parallels with Bohr’s version of complementarity expose an *analogia relationis* between these seemingly incommensurable realms of

theology and science. They show that the dynamic patterns of spiritual insight and scientific discovery are fundamentally complementary. Human knowing is irreducibly self-relational in the “hard” sciences as well as in the knowledge of God.

In section II (chapters 6–9) the “strange loop” is mined for its explanatory significance in matters of human hierarchical structures, individual choice, the concept of time, the rational necessity of the nonrational, and the priority of relationality for epistemology. In this way the authors make explicit the tacit relationality hidden in contemporary arenas of epistemology—cognitive development theory (Piaget, chapter 7), scientific discovery (Einstein, chapter 8), and theology (T. F. Torrance, chapter 9).

In the final section (chapters 10–13), the “strange loop” model is applied to human experience with special attention to the transformation of faith. When one is convicted of his or her own religious contingency before God, one experiences human insight as a gracious divine gift, “the *miracle* behind the miracle” of generative intelligence. Personal transformation is now conceived in terms of divine/human relationality, and the powers of defensive ego adaptation and social processes are negated and transformed. “When transformation is no longer the dynamic pattern of development working as the human spirit *within* the horizon of adaptation and ego formation but, instead, becomes the pattern of *Spiritus Creator*, according to which the ego itself and its horizons are radically transformed, then this same pattern prevails, but now on a far more profound scale of being.” According to the authors, transformation is not only personal but extends to the social sphere in the form of Christian *koinonia*.

Reading *The Knight's Move* is preeminently a creative exercise in overcoming the rampant incommensurability between science and theology by placing the entire debate in an altogether fresh context. In it the analytical and analogical demands of science and the constructive and apologetic concerns of theology interpenetrate. To think of consciousness in terms of spirit encourages the scientist to press beyond the limits of empirical methodology and encourages theologians to practice good, postmodern science.

Loder and Neidhardt are interested in establishing dialogue between theology and science in terms of a markedly Christian view of human spirit. *The Knight's Move* may lose some of the force of its argument because it is not situated specifically in the current debate on epistemology. The reader would benefit from hearing Loder and Neidhardt's responses to the epistemological arguments of, for example, Rorty, Habermas, Ricoeur, Bernstein, and Van Huyssteen. But the constructive choice of Kierkegaard's anthropology as the critical "lens" is an important one and helps to diffuse the reader's potential charge that the authors are operating solely within a closed Christian system. Still, those familiar with the human and natural sciences and the current debate over epistemology in the postmodern world will fare better than the uninitiated. The book does have an annotated bibliography and a glossary of terms, both of which add to its dialogical value.

The Knight's Move is a thoroughly Christian apologetic. It is a compelling alternative fundamental epistemology for both theology and science. This text deserves careful attention by scientists and theologians for whom questions of epistemology are of central importance and for whom our postcritical historical consciousness needs the boldness of Christian conviction.

—DANA R. WRIGHT

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“The Mother of All Souls: Zinzendorf’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit”

I wish to thank Dr. Richard Fenn of Princeton Theological Seminary for his provocative suggestions and supportive comments during the writing of this article.

—CRAIG D. ATWOOD

“Divine and Human Power: Barth in Critical Dialogue with Brock, Case-Winters, and Farley”

This essay, while original, draws heavily upon ideas and materials given in two seminar papers, one analyzing Barth’s conception of divine power in *Church Dogmatics II/1*, and another evaluating Brock’s notion of divine power in *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power*. The author wishes to express his gratitude to Professors Daniel L. Migliore and Mark Kline Taylor for their evaluations of these earlier works.

—GREGORY ANDERSON LOVE

“The Buddhist Notion of Emptiness and the Christian God: Buddhism and Process Theology from an Asian Perspective”

This article originated in the class of Dr. Susan Nelson of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. I would like to express my appreciation for her guidance and inspiration.

—KEN CHRISTOPH MIYAMOTO

“Paulo Freire’s Liberationist Pedagogy and Christian Education: A Critical Investigation of Compatibility”

I thank Prof. James E. Loder for his incisive comments on an earlier version of this essay.

—ROBERT K. MARTIN

Book Review: *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism*. By Theodore Dwight Bozeman.

I am indebted to Dr. James H. Moorhead and the members of his doctoral seminar (Fall 1990–91, Princeton Theological Seminary) for their contributions, which were helpful in revising the first draft of this review.

—GARY NEAL HANSEN

Book Review: *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic: Political Economy and Crisis*, 2d ed., by David Abraham; and *The Confessing Church, Conservative Elites, and the Nazi State* by Shelley Baranowski

I would like to thank Prof. Arno J. Mayer of Princeton University for introducing these two books to me and Prof. Jean-Loup Seban, formerly of Princeton Theological Seminary, whose Fall 1991 seminar provided a forum for me to explore some of the issues raised in the review.

—WESLEY W. SMITH

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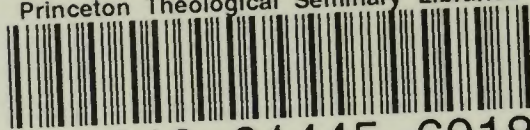
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